■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

A-list celebs among 38 in auditions for hosts, judges in RP 'Idol'

■ WORLD / A25

Opus Dei asks 'Da Vinci' film makers to stress movie work of fiction

■ NEWS / A13

RP now world's top exporter of nurses; POEA restricts pilots

■ ACROSS / A18

Sen. Lapid tagged lobbying for P300-M interchange in Porac, Pampanga

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, April 19, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 130 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Bunye's 2 wishes for Erap: Good health, good looks

WISH KO LANG ANG KATOTOHANAN!

By Nelson F. Flores, Christine O. Avendaño and Luige A. del Puerto

TWO BIRTHDAY BOYS, four wishes.

If former President Joseph Estrada could have two wishes as he

BUNYE'S/ A13

UN honors RP soldier who was killed in Haiti

By Volt Contreras

IT'S RAINING MEDALS FOR FILIPINO TROOPS on peacekeeping missions abroad.

First, the United Nations is giving posthumous honors to Army Staff Sgt. Antonio Batomalaque, who was killed in a firefight in Haiti on April 14 last year, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday.

UN HONORS/ A12

Chop-chop slays in Saudi

10 Filipinos held; body parts found

By Volt Contreras

AT LEAST 10 FILIPINOS have been held by Saudi police following the discovery of dismembered bodies and the disappearance of six of their compatriots in southern Jeddah, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

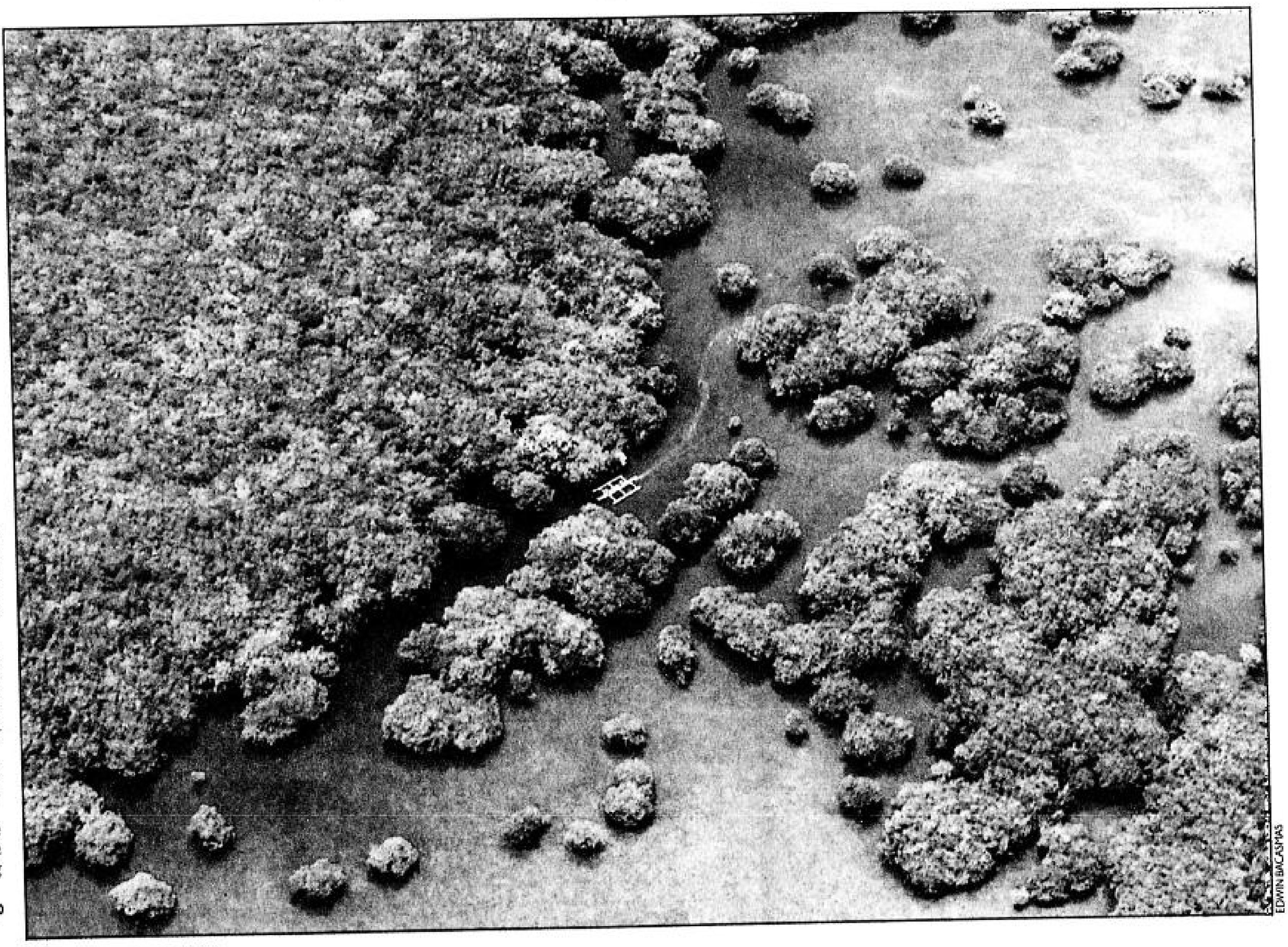
The arrested Filipinos were being kept incommunicado by investigators and could remain so for up to 60 days under Saudi law, the DFA said yesterday as it withheld the identities of the suspects and that of the missing Filipinos.

The suspects and the missing persons were initially described in the report as being engaged in "illegal lottery, like jueteng, financed by some Arabs and some Filipinos" as well as in the "cell phone card business," he said.

"*Baka nagka-onsehan* (They might have scammed each other)," the official mused.

Two of the six missing Filipinos were women and included a couple, he added. It also appeared that the missing persons knew each other.

CHOP-CHOP/ A20



EDWIN BACASMAS

PATCHES OF GREEN
This mangrove forest somewhere near Hindang and Inopacan in Southern Leyte is always a refreshing sight in our time of vanishing forest cover and endangered underwater life forms.

Lawyer tags Abalos poll fraud brains

By Cynthia D. Balana and Jerome Aning

AN ELECTION LAWYER OF THE OPPOSITION will file an impeachment complaint against Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos for allegedly allowing former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to engage in vote-rigging during the May 2004 elections.

Because the Comelec is a constitutional body, its chair and commissioners can be removed from office only through impeachment.

Sixto Brillantes, counsel for former

LAWYER/ A12

NO GANG RAPE IN SUBIC

Gonzalez: I almost exonerated them

By Armand N. Nocum and Volt Contreras

JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ had wanted to clear three of four US Marines in the rape of a 22-year-old Filipino last November but decided against it, fearing a public backlash.

"I almost exonerated them. But I didn't, if only to satisfy the mob," Gonzalez told reporters.

And so, instead of facing rape charges as principals, Marine Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis and S/Sgt. Chad Carpentier would be charged as accessories in the Nov. 1, 2005, incident at the Subic Bay Freeport. They face from 6 to 12 years' imprisonment if convicted.

The main suspect, however, Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, would be charged with rape for allegedly sexually abusing the woman inside a van while on furlough at the close of a joint RP-US counterterrorism exercise in the Philippines.

Rape has a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Gonzalez said he decided to include Silkwood, Duplantis and Carpentier, who were in the van when the alleged rape happened, as accessories because they did nothing to stop Smith.

"The fact is that they knew what was going on ... and yet they did nothing. That makes them accessories," he said.

Gonzalez said he also gave weight to the admission of the victim that it was only Smith who actually committed the sexual assault.

"There was no gang rape. It is impossible to gang-rape the victim in 30 min-

GONZALEZ/ A20

RP braces for shock as oil hits $71 per barrel

By Christine O. Avendaño and Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING AT measures like improving the public's access to ethanol and coco-diesel and expanding the number of gas stations offering a P1-discount on diesel fuel to public utility vehicles to cushion the impact of escalating world oil prices on Filipino consumers.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said Cabinet officials expanded yesterday the mitigating measures put in place last year "in order to address the resurgence of high oil prices in the international market."

RP BRACES/ A9

IN THE KNOW

Why oil prices are rising

OIL PRICES RECENTLY HIT HISTORICAL highs due to increasing worries over a supply shortage amid the conflict in Nigeria, tensions over Iran's nuclear program and the anticipated increase in demand in the United States during the summer months.

In Nigeria, militants demanding that locals get more benefits from their country's energy wealth have resorted to destroying oil facilities and kidnapping foreign oil workers. Their actions, which started in mid-February, have already cut Nigerian production by more than 25 percent. Nigeria is Africa's leading oil exporter and the world's eighth largest.

WHY/ A9

Spain lauds GMA for commuting death sentences

By Volt Contreras and Jocelyn R. Uy

SPAIN IS THE FIRST FOREIGN GOVernment to laud President Macapagal-Arroyo for her controversial Easter message commuting all death sentences to life terms.

The Spanish foreign ministry has thanked Ms Arroyo for staying the execution of Francisco "Paco" Javier Larrañaga Gonzalez, who was convicted along with six others of the 1997 rape-murder of sisters Marijoy and Jacqueline Chiong in Cebu City. *(See related story on this page.)*

Larrañaga, a scion of the politically entrenched Osmeña clan of Cebu, is a dual citizen with a Spanish father (former pelotari Manuel Francisco Larrañaga) and Filipino mother (Margarita Gonzalez), according to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which released the ministry's statement yesterday.

"The [Spanish] government is pleased with the measure of commuting the death penalty by the President of the Philippines, which will benefit [Paco Larrañaga]," the DFA said in a

SPAIN/ A20

Rep. Asistio: I was a death row convict

By Michael Lim Ubac

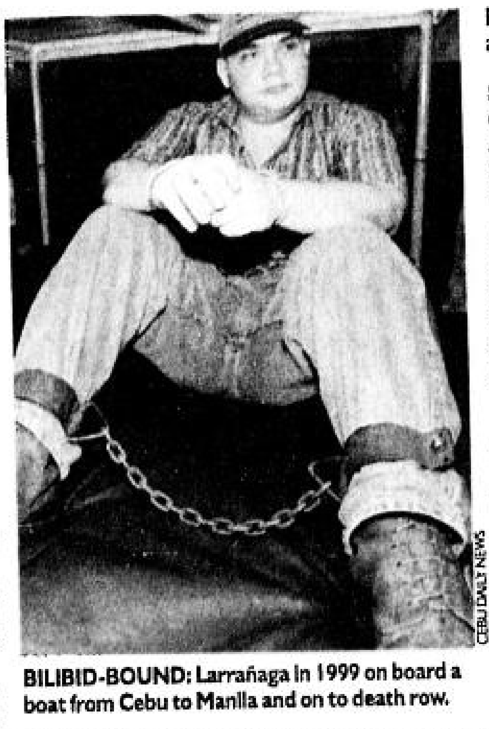
CLAIMING THAT PRESIDENTIAL clemency saved his life, a former death row inmate, Caloocan Rep. Luis "Baby" Asistio, supports the decision of President Macapagal-Arroyo to commute all death sentences to life imprisonment.

"I was a death row convict before I became a congressman," Asistio told dzMM reporter Anthony Taberna in an overseas telephone call from Los Angeles.

He added that he once served in the infamous but privileged role of a prison "mayor" [cell block leader] during martial law.

Asistio also confirmed the exis-

REP. ASISTIO/ A21



CEBU DAILY NEWS

BILIBID-BOUND: Larrañaga in 1999 on board a boat from Cebu to Manila and on to death row.

No pardon, no parole, no way...

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—DISMAY WAS THE REaction of the mother of rape-murder victims Marijoy and Jacqueline Chiong to President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to commute all death sentences to life terms.

But Thelma Chiong, national vice president of the Crusade Against Violence (CAV), said she was not surprised. She said that she had known the President's position on the death penalty for a year now, and that she respected this stance.

Thelma said she twice asked Ms Ar-

NO PARDON/ A21

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers. Southern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scatterd rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KAT E PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/04/18/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Partly Cloudy
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

Arroyo urged to 'bite the bullet' on Mayuga

By Philip C. Tubeza and TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO SHOULD "BITE THE BULLET" and order the full release of the Mayuga Report which the military has refused to submit to Congress without her approval, Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez said yesterday.

Golez, former national security adviser to Ms Arroyo, said the President should scrap Executive Order 464—which bars executive branch officials from testifying at congressional hearings without the President's consent—which the military has used to justify its withholding the report from Congress.

Golez said it would have been "unthinkable" in previous administrations for the Armed Forces to stand up to Congress and refuse a request for a copy of any report.

"PGMA should scrap EO 464, respect the Constitution, and bite the bullet," said Golez.

"But knowing her, she would not do that. It's survival at all costs, like a man in the sinking Titanic elbowing and kicking women and children to save himself," he said.

The report, prepared by a fact-finding board headed by Navy Flag-Officer in Command Vice-Admiral Mateo Mayuga, cleared Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Southern Command chief Lt Gen. Gabriel Habacon, and retired Lt. General Roy Kyamko of accusations that they engaged in poll fraud during the 2004 elections.

A fourth general mentioned in the Hello Garci wiretapped conversations, retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, was also cleared.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, the chair of the Senate committee on national defense which is investigating the Hello Garci scandal, demanded from defense department officials a copy of the report as well as the statements and affidavits of the 70 witnesses interviewed by the fact-finding board.

But Mayuga, who gave the public a summary of the report on a government TV station last Wednesday, has indicated that the report was a "secret document" because of the "confidential information" given by witnesses.

"That's not acceptable. This isn't about national security. This is about the alleged criminal acts of certain public officials," said Biazon in a phone interview yesterday.

He said he was studying what options were open to him on how to compel the military to produce the report, hinting that going to court might be one such option.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the Senate could subpoena Mayuga to present the report itself when Congress resumes sessions on May 15 after its month-long Lenten recess.

"We can force Vice Admiral Mayuga to submit the full report through a subpoena," he said in a phone interview. "The public deserves to know the full contents of the report."

But he admitted that if the Palace were to invoke EO 464 again, the subpoena would be useless.

"This brings to the fore the real necessity for the Supreme Court to resolve EO 464," he said.

Malacañang dismissed the critics of the whole Mayuga report snafu as "predisposed" against the President.

In a radio interview, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that the Mayuga board was only keeping its promise to the witnesses not to divulge their identities in exchange for their cooperation.

Ermita said that some contents of the Mayuga report were "treading on national security" matters that it was "imperative" to keep them from the public.

"It does not mean they are hiding something," Ermita said.

"The problem with the detractors of the President is that whenever they think up of charges to throw against her and investigate them, they are predisposed to think that whatever is on their mind should necessarily be the outcome of the investigation. If it turns out different, they will claim it's a whitewash," said Ermita. *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan and Donna Pazzibugan*

Japanese firm agrees to pay for Naia 3 repairs

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE JAPANESE CONTRACTOR which government regulators have blamed for the allegedly shoddy workmanship in the mothballed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 has agreed to shoulder the cost of repairs in the facility, transportation department officials said.

Takenaka Corp. has apparently done so to avoid the stigma and the financial cost of being blacklisted by the Philippine government, said DOTC Assistant Secretary Robert R. Castañares.

"Takenaka has agreed to rectify the structural defects in Naia 3 and the new Bacolod airport at their own expense, following a meeting with Secretary Leandro Mendoza," he said.

Apart from the collapsed ceiling at the Naia 3, a government inspection team also discovered cracks in the runway of the Silay airport in Negros Occidental which Takenaka is also building.

The collapse of a section of the Naia 3's ceiling last month delayed the new terminal's test run which would have been the first step in the much-delayed opening of the terminal which was taken over by government after the Supreme Court voided the contract with Philippine International Air Terminal Co. (Piatco) consortium.

It was Piatco that contracted the Japan-based Takenaka to build the terminal.

Takenaka is claiming up to $100 million in payments from the government for the work it has done on Naia 3.

Castañares said the Japanese contractor has not been absolved of culpability in what the transportation department believes is the shoddy quality of its work.

"Takenaka is not yet off the hook until DOTC is satisfied with the quality of the repair work," Castañares said.

In addition, he said the DOTC wanted to determine whether Takenaka was grossly negligent or "if there was an attempt to defraud the government by using substandard materials."

Despite the dispute, the government advanced $10 million to the contractor so it would finish the work.

Castañares noted, however, that the company seemed to have slackened off work after the advance payment was made.

DOTC officials called Takenaka officials to a meeting last week where the contractor was given an ultimatum.

"Secretary Mendoza threatened to blacklist Takenaka not only in the DOTC but also in other government infrastructure agencies if it can be proven that substandard materials were used in Naia 3 and [the] Bacolod airport," Castañares said.

"So far, Takenaka has been very cooperative in the ongoing investigation," he said.

Mines probers miss April 10 deadline

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE FACT-FINDING COMMISSION CREATED by Malacañang to look into the impact on the environment of the Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project in Albay has failed to meet its April 10 deadline to submit its report to President Macapagal-Arroyo. *(See related story on Page A19)*

"We are still studying it. We have to put things together, it takes time," Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes, commission chair, told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday.

Bastes said the fact-finding body would be meeting tomorrow and on Friday to consolidate and prepare the report to the President.

The Rapu-Rapu Fact-Finding Commission was created by Ms Arroyo through Administrative Order No. 145 issued on March 10 to probe the mine spill that affected fishing in the waters around Rapu-Rapu island after the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines took a stand against large-scale mining in the country.

The mine was owned by Lafayette Philippines Inc., a subsidiary of an Australian mining company.

Bastes had earlier said it would be "impossible" for the panel to meet its April 10 deadline because of the large number of people it had to interview and the voluminous documents it had to review.

Bastes said he would ask the President to extend the deadline by at least one month but he did not say yesterday if Malacañang had granted an extension.

"What we have is not yet what is expected of us so we need more time to look into the impact on health, etc., before we give the final recommendation," Bastes had said.

The fact-finding team is composed of nine technical experts and community representatives from Albay and Sorsogon. It has been conducting stakeholder consultations and hearings since last month.

The group had invited former Environment Secretaries Antonio Cerilles, Heherson Alvarez, Elisea Gozun and Michael Defensor as well as current Secretary Angelo Reyes to a hearing but only Alvarez showed up. *With Christine O. Avendaño*

Lafayette vows to do good for island

LAFAYETTE PHILIPPINES Inc. has lined up various projects to dramatically improve the quality of life in and around Rapu-Rapu Island.

Company chair and president Carlos Dominguez announced this yesterday, adding some projects are already being implemented. Other projects, he said in a press statement, are in different stages of preparation while some will go on stream once the company is allowed to resume operations.

Dominguez, whose management team took over Lafayette in mid-January, said the company is focused on regaining the trust of the host communities and making them realize it is sincere in its efforts to be their partner in growth.

Lafayette said it expected to spend about P320 million a year for its supplies, including grocery, meat, fish and office needs, that would be locally bought.

This is aside from the P10 million a year needed to provide the three barangays around its mine with free street lighting, electricity, medical support and livelihood projects, Dominguez said.

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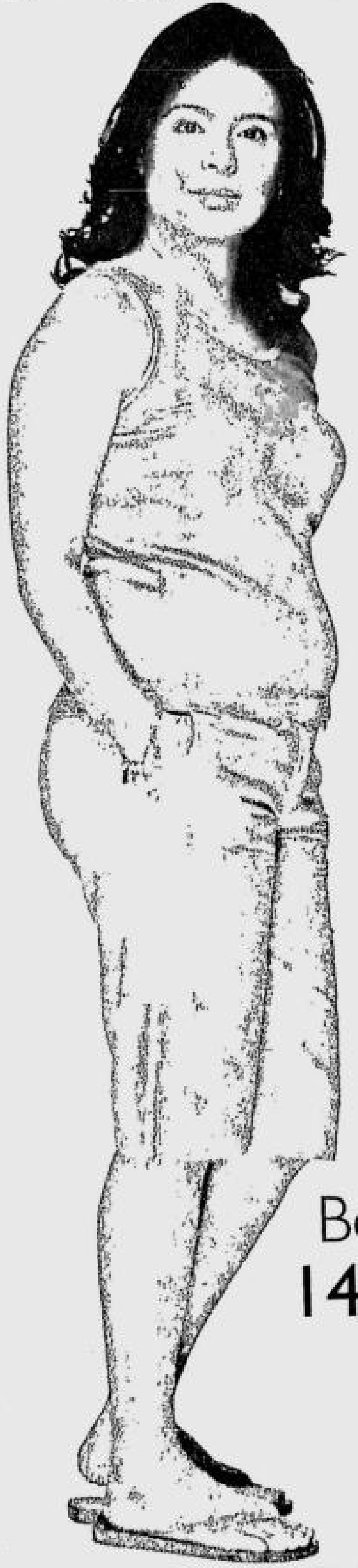
1. Jenkins AL, *et al.* Depression of the glycemic index by high levels of B-glucan fiber in two functional foods tested in type 2 diabetes. *Europ J Clin Nut* 2002; 56: 622-28.2. Evidence-based nutritional approaches to the treatment and prevention of diabetes mellitus. Diabetes and Nutrition Study Group (DNSG) of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis* 2003; 14: 373-394. 3. Position Statement. American Diabetes Association, *Diabetes Care* 2002; (1): 25 202-12. NEST0035. 4. Lavin JH, Read NW: The effect on hunger and satiety of slowing the absorption of glucose : relationship with gastric emptying and postprandial blood glucose and insulin responses. *Appetite* 25, 89-96, 1995 5. Howarth NC.*et al.* Dietary fibre and weight regulation. *Nutr Rev* 2001; 59(5): 129-138.



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RSBS CASE VS GENERAL

Prosecutor bucks justice's inhibition

By Nelson F. Flores

A GOVERNMENT PROSECUTOR has opposed the motion filed by former Armed Forces of the Philippines-Retirement and Separation Benefits System president Brig. Gen. Jose Ramiscal (ret.) asking that a Sandiganbayan justice inhibit himself from hearing the former's graft, estafa and falsification cases due to bias.

Assistant Special Prosecutor III John I.C. Turalba, in a four-page opposition to Ramiscal's motion, said the former AFP-RSBS head failed to cite a valid reason for seeking the inhibition of Sandiganbayan Fourth Division Associate Justice Jose R. Hernandez, adding that the grounds he invoked were "mere speculations and conjectures."

Ramiscal in the motion filed by his lawyer, Emelita Habacon-Garayblas, on April 4 pointed out that Hernandez was married to Prof. Carolina G. Hernandez, a member of the Feliciano Commission who had reportedly recommended the "vigorous prosecution" of all the accused in the RSBS cases.

The Feliciano Commission probed the 2003 Oakwood mutiny instigated by junior military officers protesting, among other things, corruption in the military establishment, including the AFP-RSBS.

"As the husband of Professor Hernandez, the honorable Jose Hernandez is disqualified from presiding over the instant cases. Inevitably, the effect of their spousal relationship is, at the very least, to create the impression of partiality and bias which the rules zealously guard against to maintain the independence and integrity of the courts, as well as ensure the cold neutrality of an impartial judge," said Ramiscal in his motion.

But Turalba argued that Professor Hernandez was only one member of the Feliciano Commission, a collegiate body.

He also labeled as unfair Ramiscal's assertion that Hernandez's presence on the bench could taint "with undue influence" any decision reached by the court.

"What is more intriguing is the fact that of the 15 accused, only Ramiscal saw the need for the inhibition of honorable Justice Hernandez," Turalba said.

Ramiscal is facing 13 counts of graft, 12 counts of falsification of public documents and one case of estafa in the Sandiganbayan in connection with alleged anomalous real estate acquisitions by the AFP-RSBS in Tanauan, Batangas, during his term as its president in 1996-1997.

Graft investigators said the RSBS paid out P195.85 million to acquire 148 parcels of land. Tax records, however, showed the actual cost of the land was only P28.23 million.

The investigators said two deeds of sale were drawn up—one for P28.23 million and the other for P195.85 million.

Corrections

IN THE APRIL 12 issue, a front-page story—"22 officials join Gloria in Baguio retreat; 9 abroad"—misstated that Marlon Advincula is the chair of the National Anti-Poverty Commission. According to the NAPC structure, President Macapagal-Arroyo is its chair. NAPC's lead convenor or secretary general is Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan. Advincula is a member of the sectoral council of people with disabilities, which is working with the government.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a photo caption on the front page misstated that Leo Echegaray died 13 years ago. Echegaray was the first victim of lethal injection. He died seven years ago, on Feb. 5, 1999.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a story on Page A2—"Driver to face new probe in Subic rape"—misspelled the name of the victim's lawyer. It should have been Evalyn Ursua—not Evelyn Ursua.

* * *

IN THE APRIL 13 issue, a story on Page A13—"Cherry blossom tree blooms in artist's front yard"—misspelled the Japanese term for "flower viewing" as hanani. It should be hanami.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

An Appeal to Our People: Actively Participate in the Discussions on Charter Change

MAKE YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

Charter Change will dramatically, if not drastically, change our form of government. But it won't guarantee a better government. It doesn't guarantee national unity. Nor a better life for most Filipinos.

Instead of a President, as we have now, we will have a Prime Minister. Instead of the President, our leader, being elected directly by the people, the Prime Minister (PM) will be elected by our congressmen who will now be called Members of Parliament (MPs). The PM himself will be a congressman or MP first before being elected PM.

In other words, the people will lose their power to choose their leader directly in a nationwide popular vote.

The present Senate will be absorbed into the Interim Parliament.

The Executive (what we now call the President) and the Legislature (what we now call Congress) will be virtually one and the same.

IS THIS WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT?

Yet, up to 12 million signatures are being gathered by Cha-Cha proponents to push Charter Change. This is what is called the People's Initiative. It is being used to amend the Constitution wholesale, instead of piece by piece as people's initiative is commonly and ***legally*** intended to be.

This is why the Consumer & Oil Price Watch is making this appeal to the people.

Make your voice be heard. Make the true will of the people prevail. Make our democracy work. For your future. For the people.

The Cha-Cha proponents want the people to vote on the following, using a single question:

1. **Shift from the Presidential to Parliamentary form of government.** The present Congress, 236 congressmen and those senators who want to join, will be converted into an Interim Parliament until June 30, 2007. **The Interim Parliament will set the date of the first Parliamentary election to choose the regular members of the regular Parliament in 2010.**
2. The incumbent President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and incumbent Vice-President, Noli de Castro, will hold office until June 30, 2010 but their roles will be ceremonial as the powers will rest with the Prime Minister and the interim members of the parliament.
3. **After 2010, the most powerful person will be the Prime Minister.** The PM shall appoint the members of the Supreme Court, Justices and Judges of the lower courts. The PM shall be the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines with the rank of Brigadier General or Commodore. The chairmen and commissioners of the Comelec, Civil Service Commissions, and Commission on Audit shall also be appointed by the PM.
4. Within 10 years after the approval of Cha-Cha, **a federal system of government shall be established.** The parliament shall provide by law the division of the country **into as many "independent states"**, allocating uniform powers and reserving to the federal government powers on national defense, foreign relations, monetary policies, and other such powers deemed imperative.

IS THIS WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT?

We reiterate our appeal to the people. Make your voice be heard.

A. Do you agree with the 4 transitory amendments stated above?

☐ **YES, I agree**
☐ **NO, I do not agree**

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Tax take up 28% for first quarter

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF Internal Revenue collected P134.96 billion in the first quarter of the year, 28.5 percent higher than the P105 billion collected during the same period last year.

The BIR also surpassed its P131.39-billion revenue collection target for the first quarter of the year by 2.7 percent, boosting the chances of the national government to further trim down its budget deficit.

Enhanced system

Revenue authorities attributed the increase in collection to several revenue-enhancement programs, including the enhanced tax auditing system.

President Macapagal-Arroyo announced the first quarter collections of the BIR which she said accounts for about 80 percent of the national government's revenues.

Thus, higher BIR collections make the government comfortable in meeting its fiscal targets.

For 2006, the Arroyo administration wants to reduce its budget deficit to only P124.9 billion from P146.8 billion last year.

Deficit reduction

To help meet the budget-deficit reduction target, the BIR is tasked with collecting P675.4 billion for the whole year.

Fiscal officials said the BIR's first-quarter collection keeps it on track to meet its full-year revenue collection target.

The President likewise cited the improved revenue collection performance of the Bureau of Customs, the second-largest revenue earner for the government.

The BOC earlier reported that it collected P42 billion in the first quarter of the year, higher than its P38.62-billion target. The first quarter collection of the BOC was also higher than the P30 billion it collected during the same period last year.

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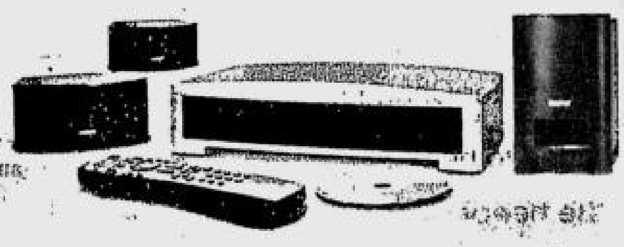

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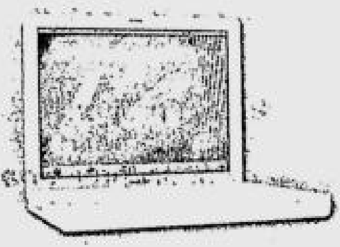

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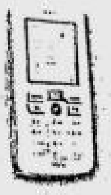

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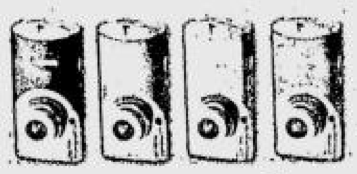

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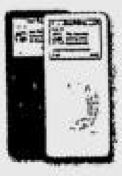

THE 2006 PHILIP MORRIS "FEEL THE CHILL" OFFICIAL MECHANICS

1. Promotion period is from April 10 to June 4, 2006.

2. Only adult smokers 18 years old and above (as of April 1, 2006), who are Philippine residents, can enter the PHILIP MORRIS "FEEL THE CHILL" promotion.

3. To enter the draw, write your name, address, age (as of April 1, 2006), telephone number and signature on the back of an empty pack of any Philip Morris variant.

4. Only genuine and original Philip Morris packs – manufactured by Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. (Philip Morris) purchased in the Philippines, and bearing the Philippine Government health warning and pack seal with complete information requested in item 3, will be accepted as valid raffle entries.

5. No photocopies or counterfeits of Philip Morris packs will be allowed. Once submitted, all Philip Morris packs will become the property of Philip Morris, including the right to edit, publish, and use the information therein without any consideration or payment to the participant. Raffle entries will not be acknowledged or returned.

6. Drop your entries in drop boxes at authorized retail outlets/drop centers or mail to:

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7. All entries must be received by Philip Morris not later than June 4, 2006. Philip Morris and its agents will have no responsibility for lost, illegible, incomplete, misdirected, mutilated, postage due, or late entries.

8. The draw will be held on June 23, 2006 in the presence of a DOH-BFAD representative. The following prizes will be drawn:

Quantity	Description of Prize
1	Porsche Boxster 2.7 Roadster
15	Bose 3-2-1 GS-II Home Entertainment System
20	Apple iBook 40GB
45	Sony Ericsson W800i mobile phones
65	Canon IXUS iZOOM digital cameras
160	Apple iPod Nano 2GB

9. The names of the winners will be published in one of the leading newspapers not later than July 16, 2006. Winners will be notified via telegram as to when and where they can claim their prizes. By participating, the winners agree to the inclusion of their names and/or pictures in the Winners Advertisement.

10. Prizes will only be awarded to the person whose name appears on the winning entry. Prizes not claimed within 60 days from publication of the winners, or notification of winners, whichever comes later, will be forfeited with the written approval of the DOH-BFAD.

11. In claiming a prize, the winner must present the original notification telegram from Philip Morris and two (2) original and valid identification documents [Driver's license, Passport, Birth Certificate] and Tax Identification Number (TIN). The IDs presented (singly or collectively) should show the following information below. If the IDs submitted do not contain the following three (3) pieces of information, it will not be accepted as valid proof of identification:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth or Age
- Signature

12. In case the winner is unable to present two (2) original and valid ID's acceptable to Philip Morris, he/she must submit sworn affidavits, executed by two (2) disinterested persons attesting to his/her identity; and a certification from the responsible municipality/city official certifying that he/she is a resident of the said municipality/city.

13. In cases wherein the winner cannot personally claim the prize for any reason, he/she can send a proxy. The proxy should be able to present the following:
- A letter of authorization duly signed by the winner, nominating the proxy as the acknowledged recipient of the prize on the winner's behalf.
- Two (2) original and valid ID's of the winner (singly or collectively showing the required information as mentioned in item 11).
- Two (2) original and valid ID's of the proxy.
- Original copy of the notification telegram from Philip Morris.

14. An entrant can only win once. If a person is drawn more than once, the winner will receive the prize of the higher value and a winner for the other prize will be re-drawn.

15. Prizes are not transferable or convertible to cash.

16. Prizes will be supplied with standard dealers' warranties only, where available. Philip Morris and its agents will not be liable with respect to: (i) any death or injury or consequential loss or damage arising from the use of any prize; (ii) any dealer's refusal to honor any warranty.

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19. All decisions of Philip Morris and its agents are final and no objections will be entertained.

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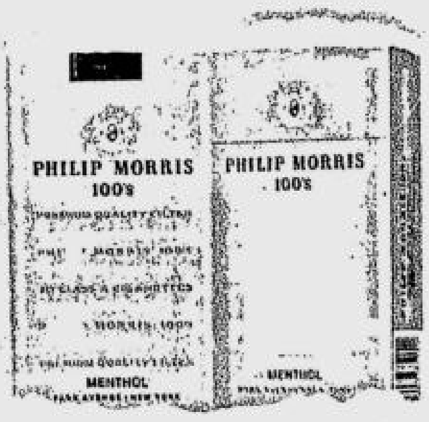

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More anti-GMA Pinoys favor Cha-cha, says survey

By Cyril L. Bonabente, Christian V. Esguerra and TJ Burgonio

FILIPINOS WHO BELIEVE President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation would be good for the country favor constitutional reform more than those who believe the country would fare better if she stayed, according to the results of a new survey by Pulse Asia.

Pulse Asia consultant Mario Taguiwalo said a national poll conducted from Feb. 14 to March 4 showed that 59 percent of Filipinos thought it would be best if the President resigned, and 46 percent of this number also wanted the 1987 Constitution changed.

But of the 34 percent of Filipinos who wanted Ms Arroyo to stay, only 36 percent favored Charter change, Taguiwalo added.

In short, 27 percent of Filipinos wanted both Cha-cha and the President's resignation, while 12 percent wanted Cha-cha and to let her stay.

Of those who wanted the President to resign, 48 percent were not in favor of Charter change. Given the survey's error margin of three percentage points, this means there is a statistical tie between the anti-GMA who favor Cha-cha and the anti-GMA opposed to Cha-cha.

On the other hand, pro-GMA Filipinos who favored Cha-cha (36 percent) were outnumbered by the pro-GMA who disagreed with it (54 percent).

The results of the survey were released as the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), an umbrella organization of various Protestant denominations, added its voice to the growing opposition to the Malacañang-backed move to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

"What good would a change in the Constitution do when the process is clearly wrapped in the agenda of...those who want to further perpetuate themselves in power, including President Arroyo who is facing serious doubts (over) the legitimacy of her rule?" the NCCP said in a statement titled "Not at This Time, Not for the Wrong Reasons."

The NCCP said it shared the position of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, which had earlier voiced alarm over the timing and manner of the proposed shift to a parliamentary system.

"We will transform our Easter prayers into acts that will frustrate any attempt, Charter change included, that will jeopardize the freedom, sovereignty and welfare of the Filipino people," it added.

Like the Catholic bishops, the Protestants said they were not against constitutional reform but were concerned that it was being done "at a time when the grim spectre of a more authoritarian rule seems to loom in the horizon."

Meanwhile, the Liga ng mga Barangay sa Pilipinas announced yesterday it was mounting a public information campaign on Charter change in all of the country's 42,000 barangays to enable people to make an "informed choice."

In the same statement, the Charter Change Advocacy Commission (AdCom) said it would resume its campaign today with a three-day offensive in Mindanao, where the Confederation of Mindanao Governors and Mayors headed by North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol had already announced its support.

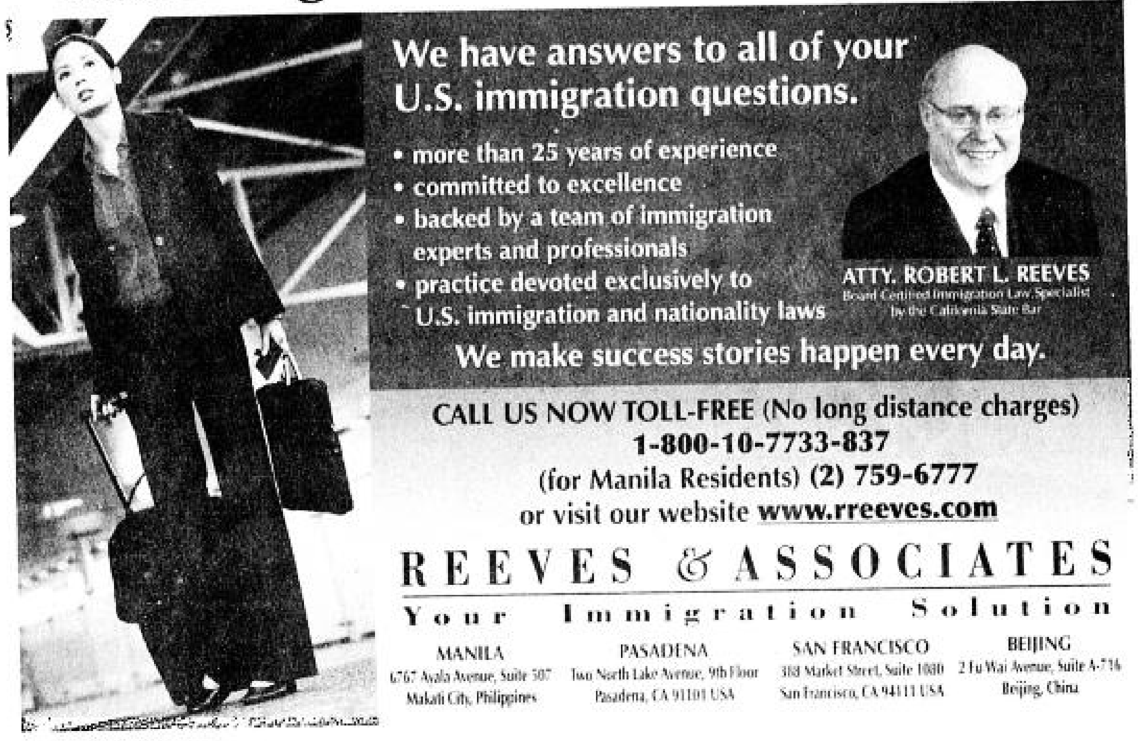
At least 10 senators led by Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan are conducting their own information drive to raise public awareness of the issues involved in having the Constitution amended.

Pangilinan kicked off the Senate's campaign in a meeting with local officials in General Santos and Davao cities last Monday.

"It is not that we oppose Charter change per se, but we oppose the manner in which they are proposing how we are to undertake it," Pangilinan told reporters at the Senate yesterday.

In his talks with local officials, the senator said he learned that the administration's claims that the clamor for Charter change in the countryside was overwhelming were inaccurate.

"Contrary to what they are saying, the people in General Santos, Davao City and other parts of the country don't know where the clamor for Charter change is coming from," he said.



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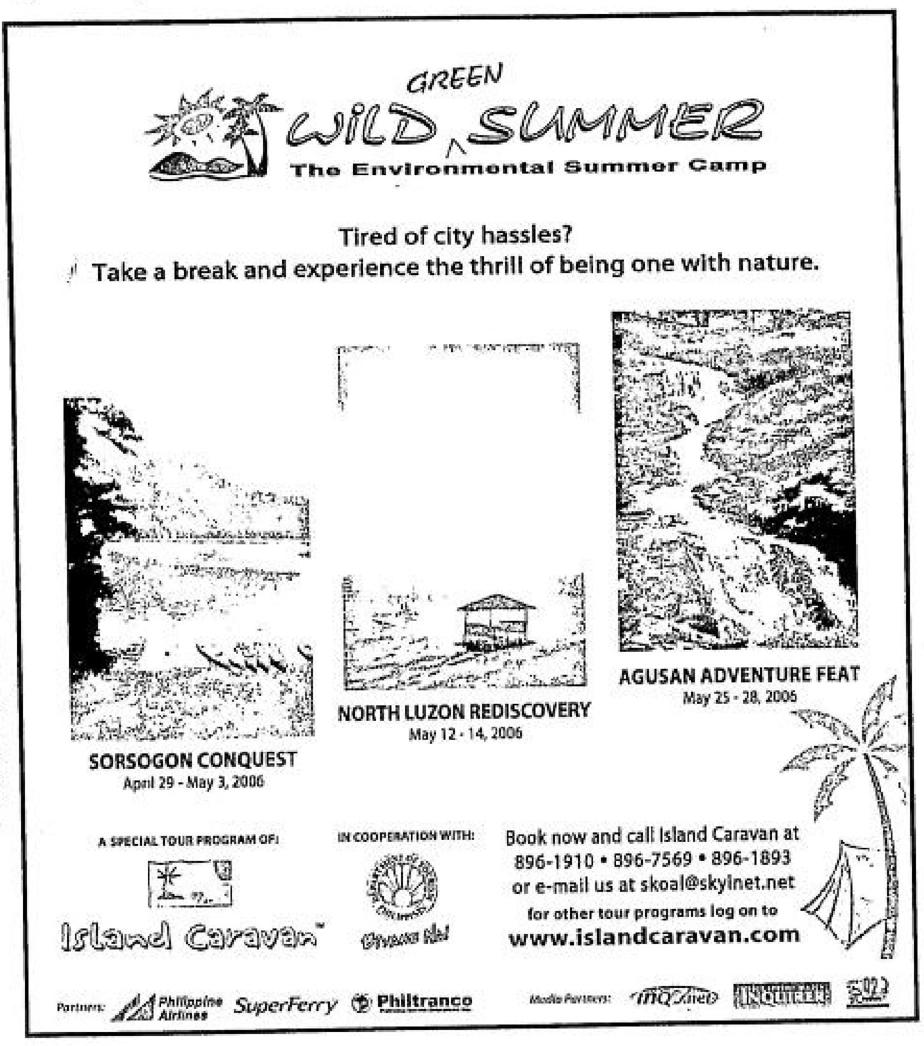

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Court grants Beltran plea for transfer to another hospital

By Tarra V. Quismundo and Luige A. del Puerto

DETAINED PARTY-LIST REP. CRISPIN BELTRAN scored a partial legal victory after a Makati court granted his appeal to be moved to a hospital of his choice provided he shouldered all expenses, and the Philippine National Police said yesterday that it would allow the transfer as soon it receives the court's order.

Beltran, 73, has been held at the PNP General Hospital in Camp Crame shortly after his arrest on rebellion charges in the wake of President Macapagal-Arroyo's proclamation of a state of national emergency last February.

Still pending before Judge Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino of the Makati Regional Trial Court's Branch 137 were Beltran's pleadings to be released from detention and for the dismissal of the charges against him. The ruling allowing Beltran to move to another hospital was issued last Monday.

"The judge resolved to grant the motion for him to undergo a thorough check-up at his own expense. But before he could be transferred, we will have to submit a written manifestation detailing where he would be transferred and what kind of treatment he would undergo," said Amylyn Sato, one of Beltran's lawyers.

The detained legislator had asked the court to allow his transfer to a better-equipped medical facility, saying he and his doctors feared a recurrence of a stroke he suffered last year in light of his stressful condition under detention.

"If there is an order from the court, the Philippine National Police will yield and obey that order," said PNP spokesman Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao. He added that Beltran would remain under police custody if the court's order simply involved a transfer to another medical facility.

In a statement issued by Beltran's office, the legislator said he hoped that the court would dismiss the "fabricated and utterly malicious" charges filed against him by the Department of Justice.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, April 19, 2006
Octave of Easter, Wednesday

1st Reading: Acts 3:1-10
Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Two disciples of Jesus were going to Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem, and they talked about what had happened. While they were talking and wondering, Jesus came up and walked with them, but their eyes were held and they did not recognize him.

He asked, "What is this you are talking about?" The two stood still, looking sad. Then one named Cleophas answered, "Why, it seems you are the only traveler in Jerusalem who doesn't know what has happened there these past few days." And he asked, "What is it?"

They replied, "It is about Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet, you know, mighty in word and deed before God and the people. But the chief priests and our rulers sentenced him to death. They handed him over to be crucified. We had hoped that he would redeem Israel.

It is now the third day since all this took place. It is true that some women of our group have disturbed us. When they went to the tomb at dawn, they did not find his body; they came to tell us that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that Jesus was alive. Some friends of our group went to the tomb and found everything just as the women had said, but they did not see him."

He said to them, "How dull you are, how slow of understanding! You fail to believe the message of the prophets. Is it not written that the Christ should suffer all this and then enter his glory?" Then starting with Moses and going through the prophets, he explained to them everything in the Scripture concerning himself.

As they drew near the village they were heading for, Jesus made as if to go farther. But they prevailed upon him, "Stay with us, for night comes quickly. The day is now almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When they were at table, he took the bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave each a piece.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; but he vanished out of their sight. And they said to each other, "Were not our hearts filled with ardent yearning when he was talking to us on the road and explaining the Scriptures?"

They immediately set out and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and their companions gathered together. They were greeted by these words: "Yes, it is true, the Lord is risen! He has appeared to Simon!" Then the two told what had happened on the road and how Jesus made himself known when he broke bread with them.

Commentary

It is a marvelous week hearing the vastly different accounts of the disciples seeing the Risen Lord! And hearing in the Acts of the power that comes through those who believe and carry the risen Lord within them. Peter gives what he has: belief and memory. And Cleophas and his wife are brought back to life with the Scriptures in the mouth of Jesus, bringing them understanding and hope once again. It is passed on by word of mouth: word, story, memory, hope, life, and just the telling of the story summons life back into their hearts and flesh. We must tell the story in community and stay alive in the Risen Lord.

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RP, Korea to mark 55th year of Battle of Yuldong

THE PHILIPPINES AND SOUTH KOREA WILL mark on Saturday the 55th anniversary of the "Battle of Yuldong," the most famous of the many victorious battles fought by Filipino soldiers during the Korean War (1950-53).

South Korean Ambassador Hong Jong Ki and Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, commanding general of the Philippine Army, will be the guests of honor during the 7 a.m. event at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

They will be joined by veterans belonging to the five Battalion Combat Teams (BCTs) that comprised the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea (Peftok). Over 7,000 Filipino soldiers served in Korea from 1950 to 1955.

The Philippines suffered some 700 casualties in helping save South Korea from conquest by communist North Korea and China.

About 100 of these casualties were incurred in the bloody Yuldong battle by the 10th BCT, the first Filipino unit to fight in the Korean War. The 900 men of the 10th BCT withstood the assault of the Chinese 12th Army in a savage night that saw the Filipino lines remain unbroken.

Chinese casualties were in the thousands and the 10th BCT's successful defense stalled the advance of the Chinese 12th Army and its 40,000 men.

An account of the Philippines' participation in the Korea War can be found at www.geocities.com/peftok, a website written by Art Villasanta, son of the late Korean War orrespondent Johnny Villasanta.

Welcoming the guests will be the officers of the Peftok Veterans Association Inc. (PVAI) led by its president, Brig. Gen. Bienvenido Castro (ret). PVAI is the only association of Filipino Korean War veterans, less than 3,000 of whom remain alive today.

Maj. Max Young (ret), president of PVAI's 10th BCT chapter, will deliver the welcome address. Veterans, their families and South Koreans will lay wreaths at the graves of Filipinos killed in the Korean War.

The Battle of Yuldong is closely linked with the names of Capt. Conrado Yap and 1st Lt. Jose Artiaga, the two officers who died at Yuldong. Artiaga died leading his platoon of 17 men while Yap was killed in the attempt to retrieve the bodies of Artiaga and his men.

Castro said Battle of Yuldong represents the many battles fought by Peftok in the Korean War. Peftok was undefeated in all its major battles against the North Koreans and Chinese.

Among these Filipino victories were the Battles at Karhwagol by the 20th BCT; the Battle of Arsenal by the 19th BCT and the Battle of Christmas Hill by the 14th BCT.

Peftok consisted of the 10th BCT; 19th BCT; 20th BCT; 14th BCT and 2nd BCT. Peftok served under the United Nations Command, a coalition of 21 countries led by the United States.

Filipino war veteran sues US for benefits

THE FIRST EVER COMPLAINT of a Filipino World War II veteran for unpaid benefits as a soldier under US command has been filed in the US Court of Federal Claims against the government of the United States.

Rodrigo B. Ramos, a native of La Union, had apparently become weary of the long wait for US legislation to correct the infamous Rescission Act of 1948, which deprived Filipino soldiers who fought alongside American counterparts of equal benefits and privileges.

Ramos, now 80, fought as a constabulary and later a guerrilla recognized by the US Army during the WWI. Later, he enlisted in the US Navy. He filed the suit last November.

Citing six allegations of violations of presidential proclamations, orders, directives and other statutes concerning the payment of salary, allowances and privileges, Ramos asked that the defendant United States of America grant him pay back in the amount representing the difference between what he actually received during World War II and what was mandated by the primary basic pay statute in existence at the time of their induction into the US Armed Forces, plus interest and attorney's fees.

Ramos also demanded that he be recognized as a US citizen by birth since he said he was born in the Philippines during the period that the Philippines was a United States possession.

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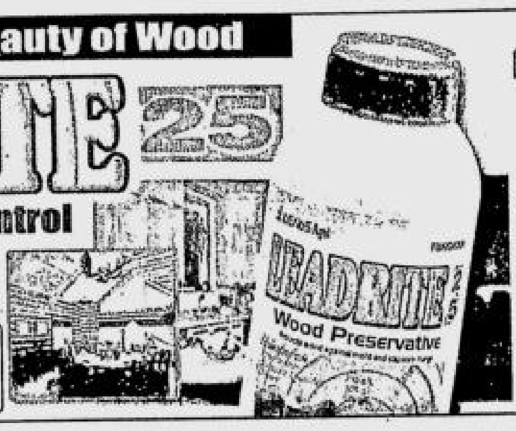

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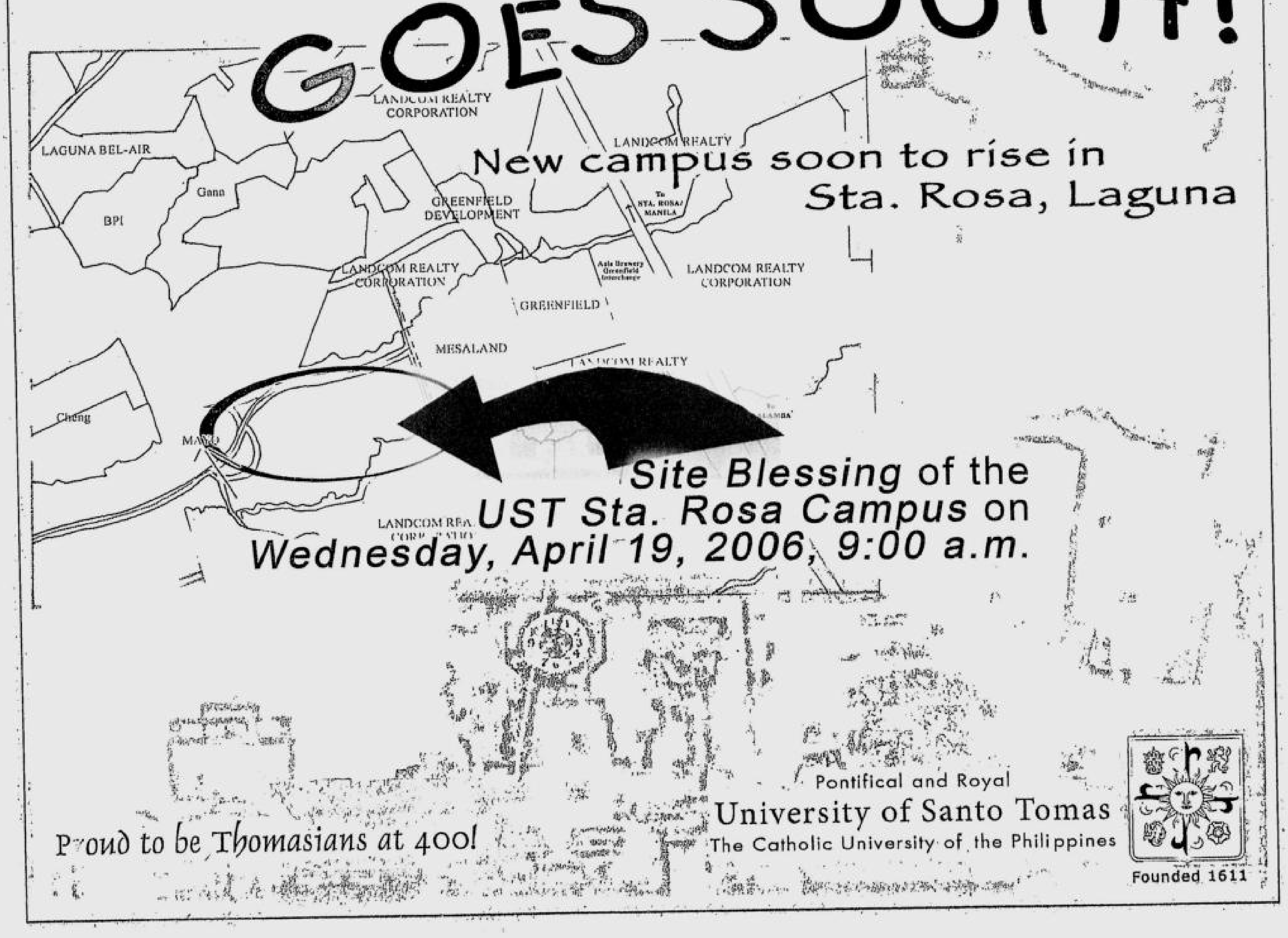
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RP braces for shock …

From page A1

Oil prices broke new ground above $71 a barrel on Monday owing to mounting tensions over Iran's nuclear ambitions, fears of US gasoline shortages and rapid economic growth in China. *(See In the Know below.)*

Brent North Sea crude closed at $71.46 a barrel. That was up 89 cents from Thursday's closing level in London, and just off a new high reached earlier Monday of $71.62.

In New York, light sweet crude for May delivery surged $1.08 from Thursday to close at $70.40 a barrel, testing levels not seen since last summer.

Crude prices had last set a record in New York of $70.85 on Aug. 30, after Hurricane Katrina hammered oil production facilities in the US Gulf of Mexico region.

Dubai crude, the benchmark for fuel prices in the country, surged to a record high of $64.7 a barrel on Monday, boosting the April average to $62.36 from $57.82 in March.

Unleaded gasoline is now sold at $83.50 a barrel and diesel at $86.48 a barrel, according to Lotilla.

Prices to persist for a month

"While we are hoping that this will be a temporary phenomenon, nevertheless we have to prepare for any eventuality that it will persist for a month or two or longer," the energy secretary said.

In a statement, the Department of Energy (DOE) said President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered government agencies to look for ways to make the surging oil prices more bearable for Filipinos.

The DOE is pushing oil firms to increase the number of gas stations offering P1-a-liter diesel discounts to the public transport sector.

At present, there are 366 gasoline stations all over the country that offer such discounts, including 194 in Metro Manila, 49 in Northern Luzon, 59 in Southern Luzon, 23 in the Visayas and 41 in Mindanao.

Other measures

Other mitigating measures include:

- Promoting the use of autogas (LPG) among taxi fleets and private vehicles to spur more gas stations to offer the fuel.
- Reducing temporarily the import tariffs slapped on crude and refined petroleum products.
- Planting of Jethropha whose seeds can be a source of biodiesel.

Ms Arroyo has given the Philippine National Oil Corp. (PNOC) the go-signal to enter into joint ventures with military camps in order to promote the planting of Jethropha.

PNOC Energy Development Corp. has already earmarked P1.6 million for planting Jatropha in its geothermal reservations.

The Jatropha Propagation Project, being undertaken in cooperation with the Dacongcogon Producers Cooperative Marketing Association and D1 Oils Asia Pacific Inc., aims to determine the agronomic requirements of the Jatropha species in the Philippines.

Substitute for diesel

PNOC-EDC said the plant's 37-percent oil content could be used as a substitute for diesel fuel.

Initially, the Jatropha plant will be planted on a 5-hectare property in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental.

Lotilla said the President also directed the Department of Finance, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs to finalize the revenue guidelines for the importation of ethanol, a biofuel that has sugarcane, corn or cassava as raw materials.

"Because at current prices, ethanol can also bring down the pump price of gasoline when this is blended with gasoline," the energy secretary said.

To jump-start the country's bio-ethanol fuel program, the President on July 22, 2005 issued Executive Order No. 449, which would reduce the tariff on bio-ethanol imports from 10 percent to only 1 percent.

Covered by the tariff reduction are bioethanol imports that would be used for the government's Fuel Ethanol Program, as duly certified by the DOE.

Since the issuance of the EO, however, the government had yet to issue its implementing rules and regulations.

Local ethanol production is not expected to start until 2007.

Compressed natural gas

Lotilla said the Cabinet also agreed to review further the provisions of the proposed biodiesel law to determine incentives can be given to vehicles, which can run on gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol.

Another alternative transport fuel that the government is pushing is compressed natural gas (CNG).

The DOE said the Cabinet would ask the Shell group to proceed with the commercial operation of its mother-daughter stations in the country.

Safety issues continued to prevent Shell Philippines Exploration BV (SPEX) and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. from starting commercial operations of their mother-daughter CNG refilling stations, based on the two firms' own assessments.

Mario Marasigan, DOE energy utilization and management bureau director, earlier said that the Shell group should submit by the end of the month a crucial report that would pave the way for the start of operations of CNG-fed buses on the Batangas-Manila-Batangas route.

He related that the DOE had already completed its own inspections of Shell's mother-daughter CNG refilling stations, but it had yet to receive a formal report from the Shell Group.

The results of Shell's own tests on the mother-daughter stations, which would have to be submitted to the DOE for concurrence, were crucial to the start of commercial operations of these stations, he said.

Ms Arroyo also ordered PNOC to explore alternative arrangements with other private investors for the construction of additional mother-daughter stations.

Cost-cutting

In the power sector, the government, through the National Power Corp. would be implementing stringent cost-cutting measures, with particular emphasis on using less oil-based power plants and shifting to those that ran on fuels such as hydro, geothermal and natural gas.

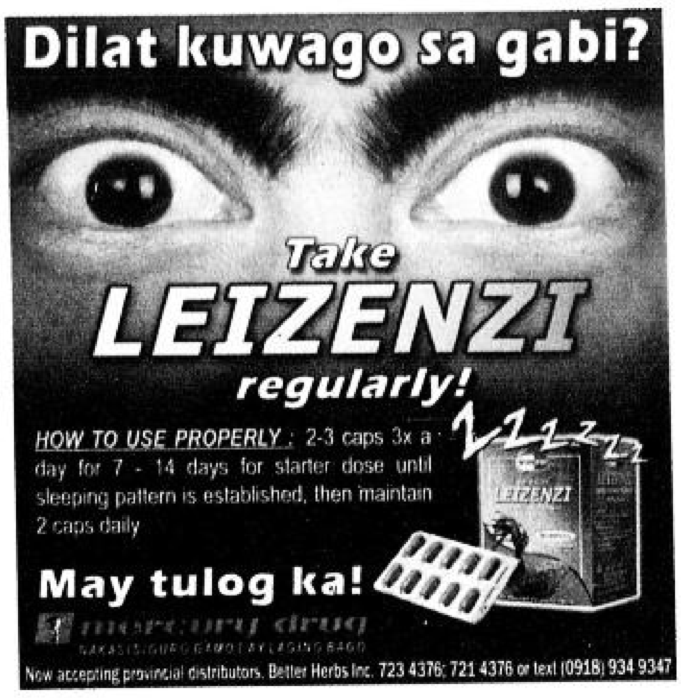
In the March 5-11 period, the country's generation mix showed an increased use of renewable energy at 26 percent in Luzon, 89.3 percent in the Visayas, and 83 percent in Mindanao. *With a report from AFP*

Why oil prices …

From page A1

Iran, which announced last week that it had enriched uranium for use in power stations, said it would continue to pursue its nuclear program, raising fears it is trying to build an atomic bomb. Concerns over a possible US military action are also growing. Any attack on Iran, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (Opec) second largest producer, will lead to a major disruption in world supply.

Current crude oil production is barely keeping up with the growing global demand. As the summer driving season nears, the world's largest energy consumer—the United States—will need more crude to make gasoline. But the country's gasoline inventories have been shrinking and its gasoline production limited due to tight refining capacity. *Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research*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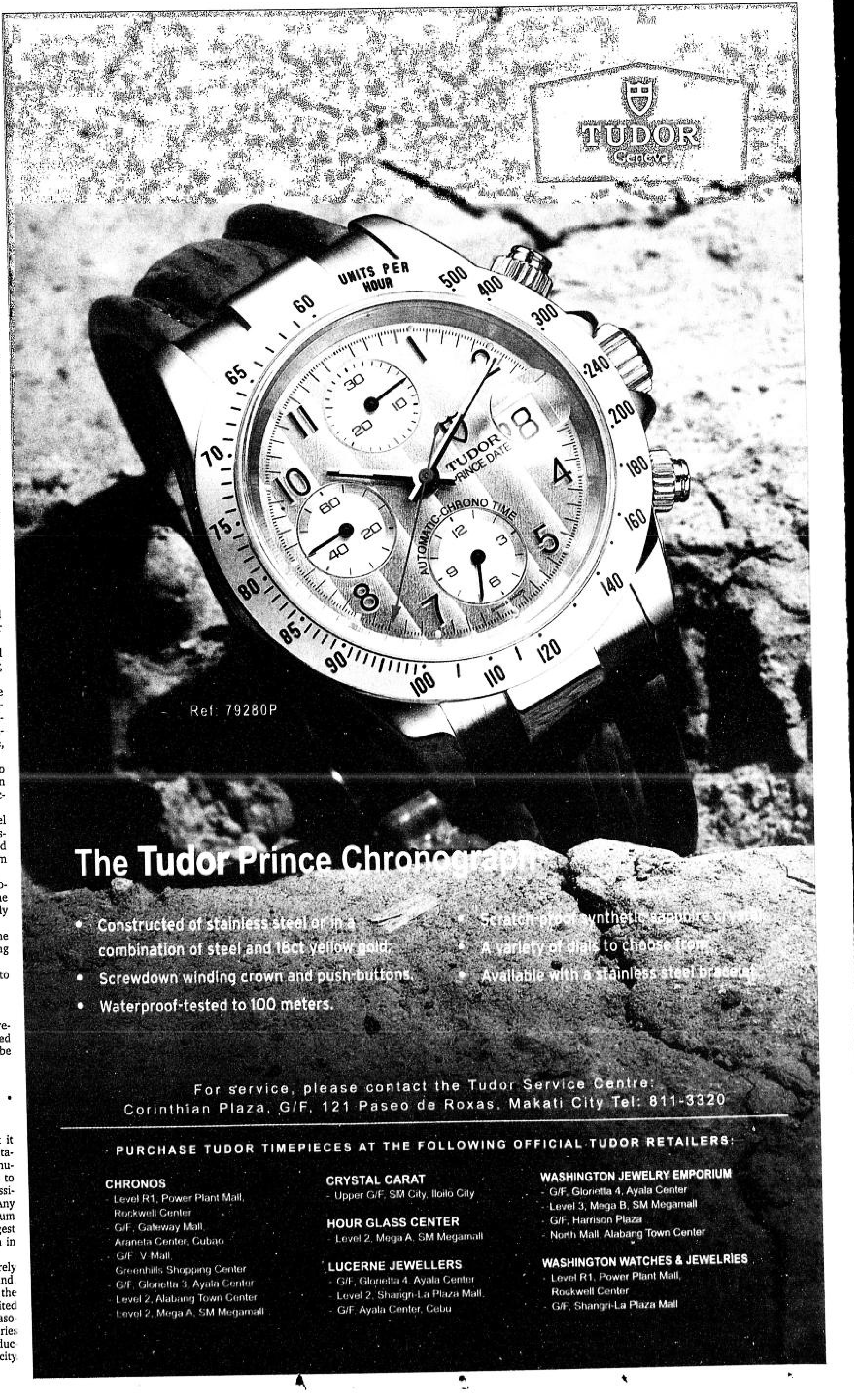

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Filipinos' English proficiency waning, says survey

WHILE MOST FILIPINOS BELIEVE GOOD English communication skills lead to better job opportunities, national proficiency in English has declined over the last 12 years, a recent nationwide survey by the Social Weather Stations showed. This is compared to previous SWS surveys in December 1993 and September 2000.

The March 2006 survey showed that two out of three Filipino adults (65 percent) understood spoken and written English, while about half (48 percent) said they could write in English. A third (32 percent) said they spoke English, while 27 percent said they thought in English. Some 14 percent said they were not competent in any way when it came to the English language.

In the 1993 and 2000 surveys, three of four Filipino adults said they understood spoken and written English. Three of five said they could write in English, while more than half said they spoke English. Two-fifths said they thought in English while only 7 percent said they were not competent in any way when it came to the language.

The March 2006 survey also found that more than half of Filipinos (68 percent) agreed that developing good English communication skills opened up better job opportunities for them. Net agreement was higher in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon, in urban rather than in rural areas, among the upper rather than the lower classes, and among those who had more education.

Self-assessed English proficiency was higher in Metro Manila than in other areas, in urban rather than rural areas, among upper than lower classes, among younger than older age groups, and among those with higher education.

The personal use of English had likewise declined in March 2006 compared to September 2000, with 19 percent saying they had almost no use for the English language, compared to 10 percent in 2000.

The SWS Survey for the First Quarter of 2006 was conducted on March 8-14 with face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, with a sampling error margin of plus or minus 3 for national percentages and plus or minus 6 for area percentages.

The survey results were released a day after President Macapagal-Arroyo advised schoolteachers to watch the American children's educational TV show "Sesame Street" to relearn the basics of the English language, during her visit to the National Educators Academy of the Philippines on Monday.

The latest survey was commissioned by the Promoting English Proficiency (PEP) Project (www.promote-english.org), an initiative of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines and the Makati Business Club, with funding from Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc.

The additional question on English proficiency and job opportunities was broached by the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) and EON The Stakeholder Relation's Firm's English is Cool campaign (www.english-is-cool.org), co-sponsored by the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce.

For inquiries on the PEP project, the PEP secretariat may be reached at tel. 885-7867, ext. 485, or e-mail pep@sun.com.ph. Inquiries on the English is Cool campaign may be coursed through the ECCP office at tel. 759-6680 or info@english-is-cool.org. *Kate Pedroso, PDI Research*

Students, teachers told: Shun 'Taglish'

AS A RESULT OF THE Social Weather Stations survey showing a decline in English proficiency among Filipinos, the Department of Education is discouraging teachers and students from using "Taglish" but instead to speak correct English inside as well as outside the classroom. *(See story at left)*

DepEd Officer-in-Charge Fe Hidalgo said the use of Taglish had contributed to the decline in English proficiency among Filipinos, pointing to the recent SWS survey.

She said learning correct English would make Filipinos bilingual and increase their chances of making it in a globalized world.

But she said the national language must not be ignored.

"I don't think our national language [should] take a back seat because our own language is very important," Hidalgo said.

The survey was commissioned by the Promoting English Proficiency (PEP) project of the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines and the Makati Business Club.

But believing that two languages were better than one, a multinational cooperative yesterday kicked off a five-year campaign for bilingualism, which seeks to promote English proficiency without undermining the vernacular.

'English is Cool'

Aiming to strip English of its elitist cloak, the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) and EON The Stakeholder Relations Firm, launched "English is Cool," a campaign to encourage the Filipino youth to "supersize your opportunities" by fluently speaking, writing and even thinking in English.

"The campaign is not about English versus Tagalog (Filipino), but that two is better than one. Knowing two languages offers better job opportunities. We are in this campaign because we believe it's time to reinvest in developing English. It is the competitive advantage of the Philippines," said Henry Schumacher, ECCP executive vice president.

The campaign, a click away on its website www.english-is-cool.org, is backed by the Ayala Young Leaders Congress, the Business Processing Association of the Philippines, PEP, Hands on Manila and Far Eastern University.

"English is the language of the world, of business, the Internet, even government exams ... The world has become a very small global village, and as I always tell our students, they were born into the language and they should not throw it away," said FEU president Lydia Balatbat-Echauz.

Within a five-year period, the campaign seeks to "reverse the decline in national English proficiency" by reviving its usage among the youth and those around them, and promoting the language as "a value-adding skill that is available to everyone." *Tarra V. Quismundo, Alcuin Papa*

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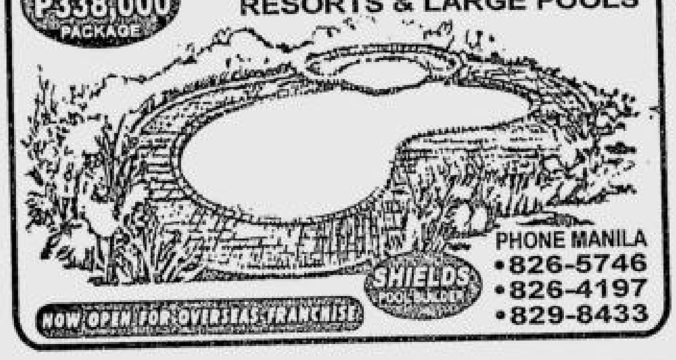

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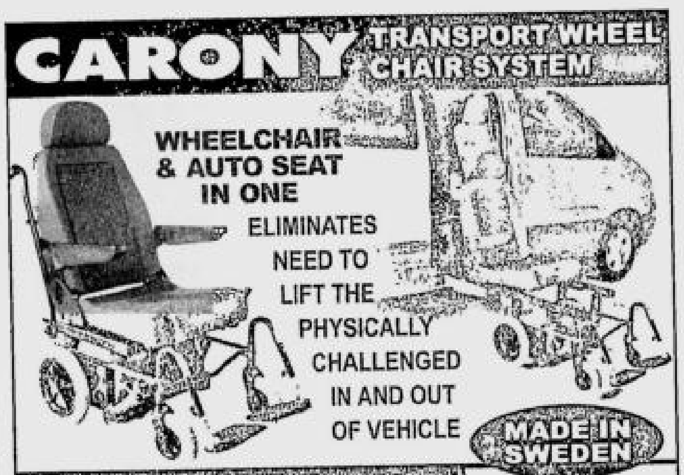

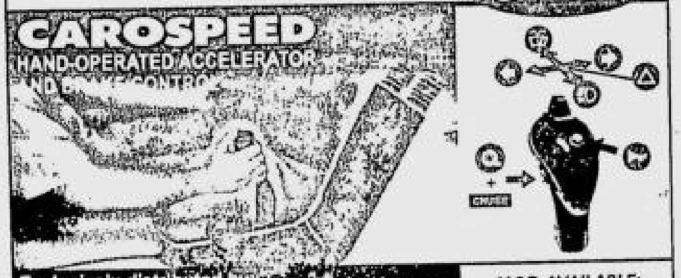

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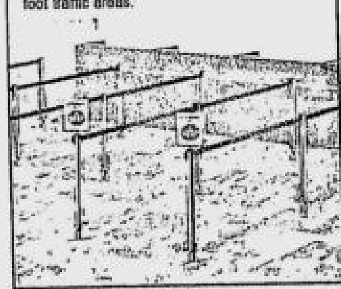

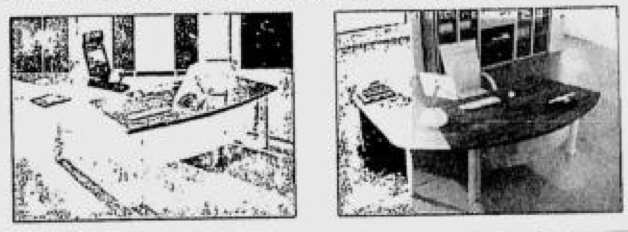

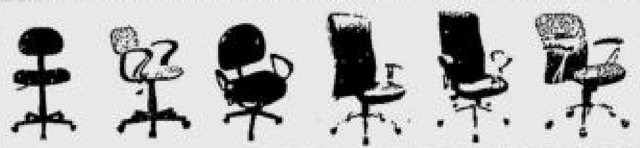

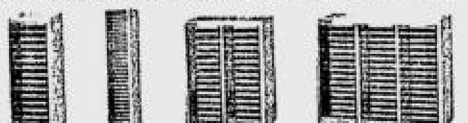

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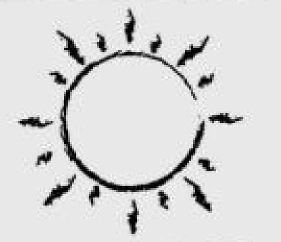

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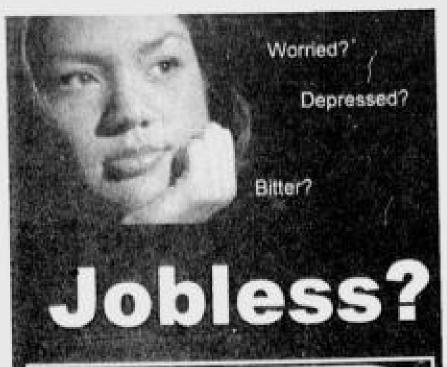

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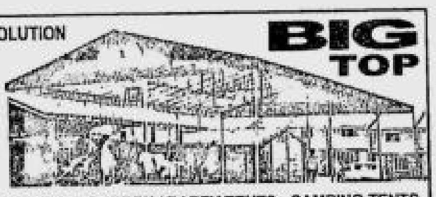

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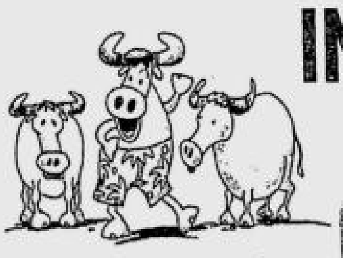

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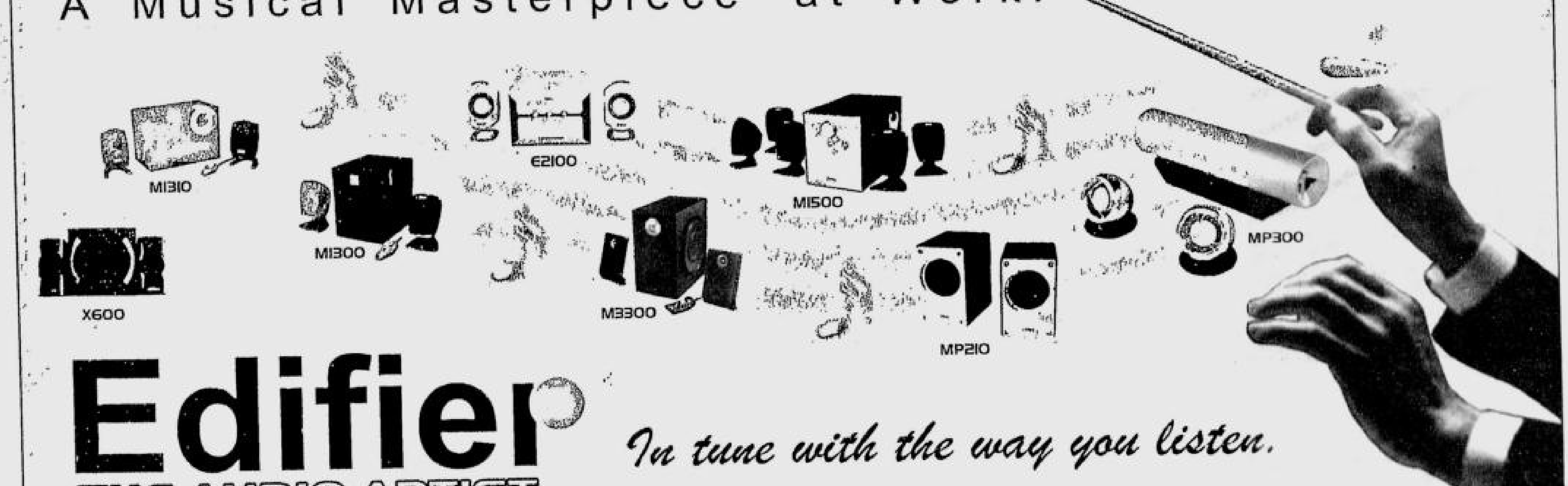

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Lawyer tags Abalos election fraud brains

From page A1

Sen. Loren Legarda in her election protest against Vice President Noli de Castro, said Abalos knew all along what Garcillano was doing to ensure the victory of President Macapagal-Arroyo and De Castro.

"Garcillano was not the principal author of the cheating. It was Abalos all along. Garcillano served only as the point man," Brillantes told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said the vote-rigging operations were uncovered through the "Hello Garci" tapes, which supposedly contained wire-tapped conversations between the President and Garcillano.

Abalos said he was studying the possibility of filing a libel or slander case against Brillantes.

"He must face the case and if he has the evidence to back up his accusation, he better reveal it. Otherwise, if he can't prove his claim, he will be liable," Abalos said over dzMM radio.

Destabilization

Abalos said the resurrection of the accusations against the election body was part of the "destabilization" plot of Ms Arroyo's opponents.

The opposition has claimed that Ms Arroyo directed Garcillano to ensure that she get a winning margin of at least 1 million votes over movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. Ms Arroyo has denied stealing the presidential election.

The alleged cheating was among the issues contained in the impeachment complaint the opposition filed against Ms Arroyo last year. The administration-dominated House of Representatives, however, quashed the complaint.

Under the Constitution, impeachment proceedings against the President can be initiated only once a year.

Brillantes said he was advised by House Minority Leader Francis Escudero to initiate the impeachment of Abalos in July, in time for the filing of another impeachment complaint by the opposition against the President, because the two cases were connected.

6 letters

Brillantes said he had written Abalos "six times already" asking him to resign, to no avail.

The first time he wrote Abalos, Brillantes said, was when the Comelec chair confirmed the statement of election lawyer Romulo Macalintal and Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabby Claudio that Ms Arroyo had won the presidential election based on the Comelec copy of the votes even before Congress had started canvassing the votes for President and Vice President.

Abalos had always maintained that he based his announcement on the Comelec's canvassing of election returns (ERs) for the senatorial slate, which also contained the results for the presidential and vice presidential tallies. The ERs were based on precinct tallies.

Unprecedented

Brillantes said what Abalos did was unprecedented. "In the country's election history, no Comelec chair has ever announced the result of the presidential race before the canvass by Congress even began; Comelec never had a say in the presidential canvass."

Since his premature declaration, Abalos said he had found himself in the eye of a storm.

"What I did was only to back up the legitimacy of the President, whom Congress, not Comelec, proclaimed the winner," he said.

Free hand in Mindanao

Abalos, who has consistently claimed that Garcillano acted alone and that the latter's alleged illegal acts never affected the outcome of the election, challenged Brillantes and other Comelec critics to file a case in the election body or in court.

Brillantes said Garcillano was given a free hand in Mindanao, especially in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) where cheating was reported to have been most widespread and massive.

"Garcillano can't have manipulated the election all by himself. Abalos claimed he did nothing wrong but the fact that he allowed Garcillano to do as he liked in Mindanao makes him (Abalos) equally guilty," he said.

The lawyer recalled that shortly after Garcillano's appointment in early 2004, Abalos named him commissioner in charge (CIC) of Central Mindanao (which covered the ARMM because there was no ARMM regional office at the time).

As election day neared and because of the protest of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Abalos reassigned Garcillano as CIC of the Southern Tagalog and Bicol regions.

Brillantes said Abalos designated himself CIC of Mindanao but Garcillano was also made CIC for administrative matters, thus giving the latter power over Comelec and Comelec-deputized personnel in Mindanao.

Moreover, Abalos was also CIC of the National Capital Region and his duties as chair confined him to Metro Manila.

"Thus was Garcillano able to dictate the conduct of the elections in Mindanao as evidenced by the phone calls he made [that were allegedly recorded] in the 'Hello Garci' tapes and it was impossible that Abalos did not know about this," Brilliantes said.

Transfer of Gudani

The lawyer said Garcillano's influence was evident in the transfer of Marine Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, who was suddenly removed from his post as head of security for the two Lanao provinces on May 12, when the canvassing was still going on.

Abalos earlier confirmed Garcillano's action but said the commissioner did it on his own without prior approval from the Comelec en banc. He said Gudani violated a regulation prohibiting the reassignment of government personnel during the election period.

Brillantes said Abalos's alleged complicity in the election irregularities was the reason the Comelec's own investigation of the "Hello Garci" scandal remained to be concluded.

The lawyer also echoed the political opposition's contention that the certificates of canvass had been tampered with. He said the ERs would prove that cheating took place.

"If they had not been doctored yet, the original ERs that are in the Comelec's possession would show the discrepancies," Brillantes said. "Those ERs are now the best evidence we have of the cheating."

Legarda said there was no question that both the presidential and the vice presidential contests were marred by fraud.

Video

Legarda said ABS-CBN's exclusive footage on how election documents in the custody of Congress were tampered with last year provided additional proof.

The tape, which the TV network aired last night and on Holy Wednesday, featured an interview with people who claimed to have personal knowledge of the video, which detailed how genuine election returns were substituted with fake documents right on the premises of the House of Representatives.

Legarda described the switching of ERs as a "brazen cover-up" of election irregularities.

She said the video supported empirical evidence showing that the Lanao del Sur ERs, which came from Congress, had been falsified and substituted for the real documents as part of a scheme to rob the nation of its true, duly elected leaders.

Whitewash

Reacting to Speaker Jose de Venecia's statement that a House investigation yielded no evidence of ER tampering, Legarda said: "That was a whitewash because the empirical evidence was the switching of election returns in the ballots."

She said the figures on the returns from the ballot boxes that were earlier placed under the custody of the House of Representatives were different from the carbon copies of the returns intended for the Comelec and the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections.

Brillantes agreed with Legarda, saying "JDV does not know anything about it but if he said that there is no evidence of switching, then I would say that he might be in on the conspiracy."

Noli part of scheme

Legarda said De Castro was also part of the grand scheme to deprive her of victory.

"At this point in time, it is no longer in question that De Castro, sad to say, had a big part in the election irregularities from which he benefited immensely by holding office illegitimately," she said.

UN honors RP soldier who was killed in Haiti

From page A1

On April 11, the world body awarded the UN Peacekeeping Medal to 165 members of the Philippine contingent serving in Liberia.

And on April 7, UN Special Service medals were given to five members of the Philippine National Police currently deployed in East Timor.

Largest troop contributor

These were the latest citations earned by the country, now the "largest troop contributor" to UN peacekeeping operations from Southeast Asia, the DFA said.

More than 500 Filipino soldiers and police officers are now serving under the UN flag in Haiti, Liberia and East Timor, as well as in Afghanistan, Burundi, Ivory Coast, Kosovo and Sudan.

The Philippines began contributing troops to the UN and Korea in 1950 and, since then, has participated in over 20 peacekeeping missions, including those in Vietnam, the Congo, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Batomalaque will receive the Dag Hammarskjold Medal (given in memory of the former UN secretary general) when the UN marks the International Day of Peacekeepers on May 29, according to Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., the country's permanent representative to the UN.

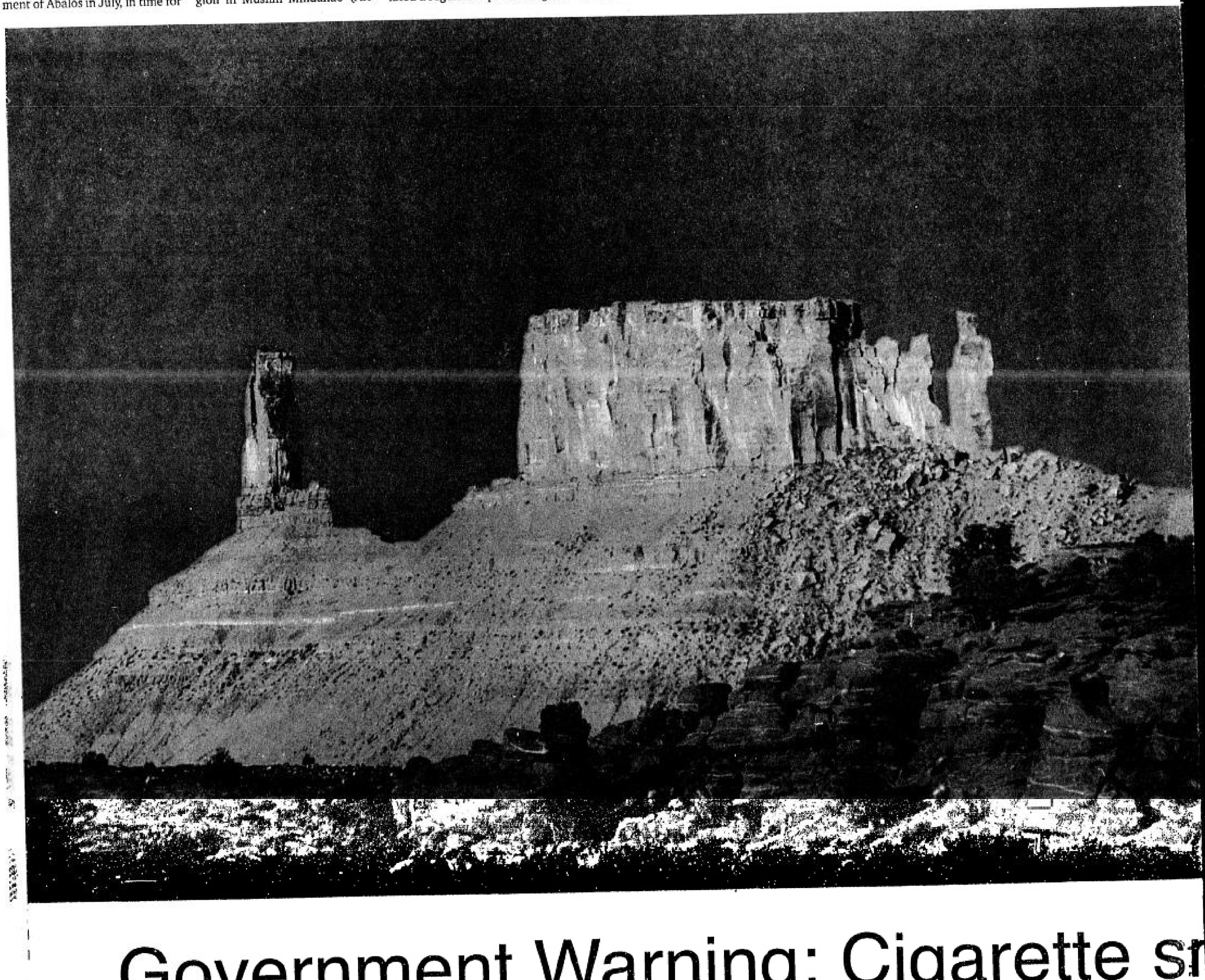
Part of the 135-member Philippine contingent in Haiti, the officer was shot dead by Haitian gunmen during an encounter in the violent slums of Soleil in Port-au-Prince. The Scout Ranger was then providing cover fire for a superior officer when he was shot.

Valor like WWII soldiers

In Monrovia, Liberia, the 165 Philippine peacekeepers received the award from UN special representative Alan Doss, Baja said in a separate report to the DFA.

Doss said he considered the Filipino troops as being driven by the "same valor" displayed by their elder comrades in World War II, noting that the Philippines marked Araw ng Kagitingan a few days earlier on April 9.

In Dili, East Timor, the following PNP personnel received UN decorations in ceremonies held at their Obridago barracks: Contingent commander Edgar Layon, professional ethics advisors Pedrito de los Reyes and Jose Molava Duenas, and border patrol advisers Joseph Pangilinan and Celso Destajo.



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Bunye's 2 wishes for Erap: Good health, good looks

From page A1

celebrates his 69th birthday today, it would be unity for the Filipino nation and for President Macapagal-Arroyo to lift Executive Order No. 464.

The controversial EO 464 bars executive branch officials from appearing in congressional hearings.

Also celebrating his 61st birthday today is Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, who also had two wishes for the former President: Good health and good looks.

"*Sana ay patuloy na mag*-improve *yung kanyang kalusugan at hangad natin na patuloy siya maging pogi* (We hope his health continues to improve and we wish he continues to look handsome)," Bunye said.

Estrada, in a brief interview yesterday, said he did not have any personal wishes for his birthday. He simply wanted Filipinos to learn the truth about the numerous scandals rocking the Arroyo administration.

"I want people to know what really happened in the 'Hello Garci' controversy, the fertilizer scam and other issues. We cannot move forward without the truth," the former leader said.

Estrada, who is in his fifth year of detention, is facing plunder and perjury charges before the Sandiganbayan Special Division.

Political VIPs

He is scheduled to attend a 7 a.m. Mass today at St. Peter's Church on Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City with his supporters before proceeding to the Sandiganbayan for his plunder trial at 9 a.m.

Political VIPs invited to attend Estrada's birthday Mass were former President Corazon Aquino, Ms Arroyo's half-sister Cielo Macapagal and Susan Roces, widow of the late Fernando Poe Jr.

National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Director Vidal Querol said some 200 cops would be deployed to secure the former President during the Mass and when he proceeds to the Sandiganbayan.

As in previous hearings, Querol said the police had not received any information that Estrada's life was under threat.

No rallies in church

The parish priest of St. Peter's Church made one request—for the police and Estrada's supporters not to turn the church into a political arena.

"Estrada's allies and well-wishers are expected to attend [Mass in the morning]. I just want to remind them about the request of the parish priest—not to hold rallies or bring banners inside the church," Querol said.

The police also expected supporters to hold a vigil at the church last night.

Greetings from Chavit

Former Manila City Prosecutor Jose Flaminiano said Estrada would continue to belie allegations that he received "jueteng" money from Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Singson, for his part, wished Estrada well on his birthday. The two used to be the best of friends.

"I wish him well on his 69th birthday. I wish him discernment or insight so he can see how things could be better for him and for our country. It is only in recognizing where one erred that one can improve himself," Singson said.

He added that Estrada should realize by now that he could no longer be president again.

"He can only be president once. The Constitution does not have a provision for reelection. He had the presidency but he screwed it up. If he thinks he could regain his power after everything he did to the country, he is wrong. It is not only illegal, it is also impossible," Singson said.

RP now world's top exporter of nurses

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE UNABATED DEPARTURE OF Filipino health professionals for better opportunities abroad has given the country a new, albeit not exactly enviable, title: The world's top exporter of nurses.

Citing her recent study, Dr. Fely Lorenzo of the University of the Philippines National Institute of Health made the pronouncement yesterday at a meeting seeking to arrest what was described as a worsening brain drain.

"The Philippines is now the biggest health service provider of overseas nurses globally," she said at the forum attended by top health officials, including from the World Health Organization.

Since 1994, more than 100,000 nurses have left the country, more than 50,000 from 2000 to 2003 alone, according to Dr. Fernando Sanchez, executive director of the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges.

Lorenzo said most of the nurses went to Saudi Arabia (57 percent), the United States (14 percent) and the United Kingdom (12 percent).

The rest went to Libya, United Arab Emirates, Ireland, Singapore, Kuwait, Brunei, Japan and the Nordic countries, Lorenzo said.

Rural hospitals feel shortage

Sanchez said the continued exodus of local professionals, particularly nurses, had been seriously felt in the countryside.

There were no more nurses in three hospitals in Surigao del Norte, Lanao del Sur and Sulu and in two others in Isabela, he said.

Two hospitals in Zamboanga del Sur could not operate new wards for lack of nurses, he said.

"All rural areas in the Philippines are, in fact, vulnerable to health and human resources deficiencies," said Sanchez.

When it hits big cities ...

Dr. Jean Marc Olive, WHO country representative, said Filipinos would most likely feel the urgency of the problem only if it "hits the big cities where the politicians are."

"It's not reaching the big cities yet, but if you go to the rural areas, you'll see the problem there," he said.

Olive said an official of Silliman University, one of the top nursing institutions in the country, had complained about the imminent departure of 17 of the school's "best teachers." It has a teaching staff of 87.

460 nursing schools

If it's any consolation, Lorenzo said, the country was producing more than enough nurses to make up for those leaving for abroad.

Every year, the 460 nursing schools in the country graduate between 15,000 and 25,000 nurses, she said.

"We don't have a shortage as far as nurses are concerned because we produce more than we need," she said. "We have a shortage in skilled and experienced nurses."

Sanchez's study noted that the Philippine General Hospital, which used to accept only the top 10 percent of nursing school graduates, has been forced to "lower its standards by hiring nurses who just make the minimum passing mark."

"It is not so much that there is a lack of applicants, but the top nursing graduates are no longer applying," he said. "They are already leaving for abroad. The PGH loses 300 to 500 nurses of their 2,000-strong health work force every year."

POEA restricts deployment of pilots overseas

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS EMployment Administration has restricted the deployment of pilots and aircraft mechanics abroad to prevent a disruption in the local aviation industry.

POEA Administrator Rosalinda Baldoz said that effective April 1, pilots and aircraft mechanics should inform their local employers six months in advance of their intention to work abroad.

The application papers must carry a certification from the employers that a resigning worker had complied with the "six-month prior notice" rule.

"This way, the operations of our local aviation industry would not be jeopardized," Baldoz explained to reporters.

Under the Labor Code, employees must give at least a one-month notice to their employers.

However, according to Emmanuel Geslani, a consultant for several Manila-based recruitment agencies, pilots are often directly recruited and hired.

"Pilots usually do not bother going through recruitment agencies. They can actually resign and leave anytime," he told the INQUIRER.

Filipino pilots and airline mechanics are lured abroad by the high salaries, ranging from P50,000 to P100,000 a month.

Review in other sectors

The POEA has also conducted an evaluation of the labor supply and demand situation in the education and nursing sectors.

The agency has consulted with government regulating and licensing agencies to determine which of the so-called "mission-critical industries" are facing a major shortage of workers.

Baldoz said POEA used a formula that takes into account the current supply of labor, the number of prospective workers and the local demand.

She explained that the local supply or the inventory of qualified employees for any industry would be determined by data provided by the licensing authority on prospective entrants, the number of those applying for licenses, and the average passing rate for a particular license.

Also, a 20-percent buffer—the regular standard used in industry inventories—would be added to the total local demand, Baldoz said. An industry demand with less than 20 percent corresponding supply of workers would be considered critical, she said.

No to total ban

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas earlier rejected demands by some industry groups that the government impose a total deployment ban on workers in aviation, health care and education to stop what they described as a "hemorrhage of critical skills."

Sto. Tomas said an outright ban could be "constitutionally problematic" since it would violate a person's right to work wherever he or she wanted to.

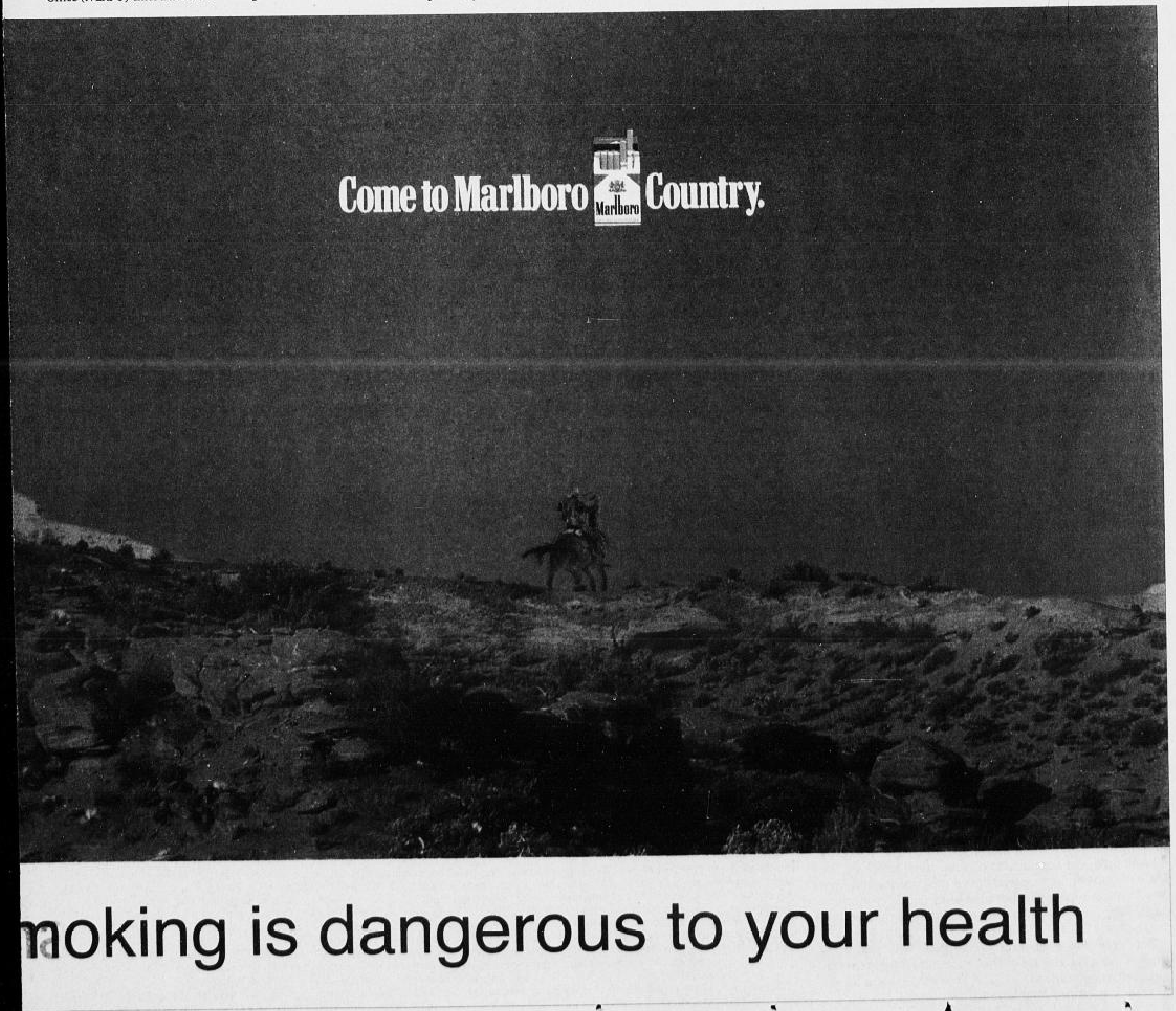
"Barring a worker from leaving his or her firm might be construed as involuntary servitude and the courts would surely just issue a restraining order against it if someone complained," she said.

Remedial measures needed

Industry groups in the three sectors warned that unless remedial measures were instituted soon, some of the country's vital industries and services could ground to a halt.

They said that under Section 5 of Republic Act No. 8042 or the Migrant Workers Act of 1995, the state has the power to suspend or ban the deployment of certain critical skills and talents "in pursuit of national interest or when public welfare so requires."

Section 31 of the same law states that the government shall provide professionals and other highly skilled OFWs with "adequate incentives and programs so as to secure their services in priority development areas of the public and private sectors."



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Stealth bomb

EDITORIAL

FROM JULY TO SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR, THE fact-finding board headed by Vice Adm. Mateo Mayuga listened to "resource persons," leading to expectations that upon the scheduled completion of its investigation in October last year, the public would be informed of its findings. The report, however, was submitted in January, a month after Mayuga had been promoted to commander of the Philippine Navy. The release of the findings in April means that it took six months longer than expected to reach the public. And when the report was finally released, it was deliberately downplayed. A series of notifications to the press was timed to coincide with the beginning of the Holy Week holidays.

The report, Mayuga explained, was not meant to summarize the inquiry into allegations that some officers and men of the Armed Forces of the Philippines played a role in electoral irregularities. Instead, the report focuses on what can be done concerning the AFP's future role in elections.

But the fact remains that the fact-finding board was convened in the wake of shocking accusations that top military officers were involved in electoral fraud. And the report itself has come down in favor of the senior officers accused of participating in cheating for the benefit of President Macapagal-Arroyo in May 2004. Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon, retired Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko and retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani were all mentioned in the controversial "Hello, Garci" recordings and have all been cleared by the Mayuga report.

Two of the three generals who've been cleared—Esperon and Habacon—are not only controversial but also clearly destined for higher things under the Arroyo administration. Esperon, for one, is widely expected to be named Armed Forces chief of staff when Gen. Generoso Senga retires later this year.

Disgruntled elements in the military previously called for the investigation of Brig. Gen. Nehemias Pajarito and Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, both of whom got their present star rank after the elections. The same elements put forward a list of senior and junior officers, from colonels down to lieutenants, for investigation for violations of the election law.

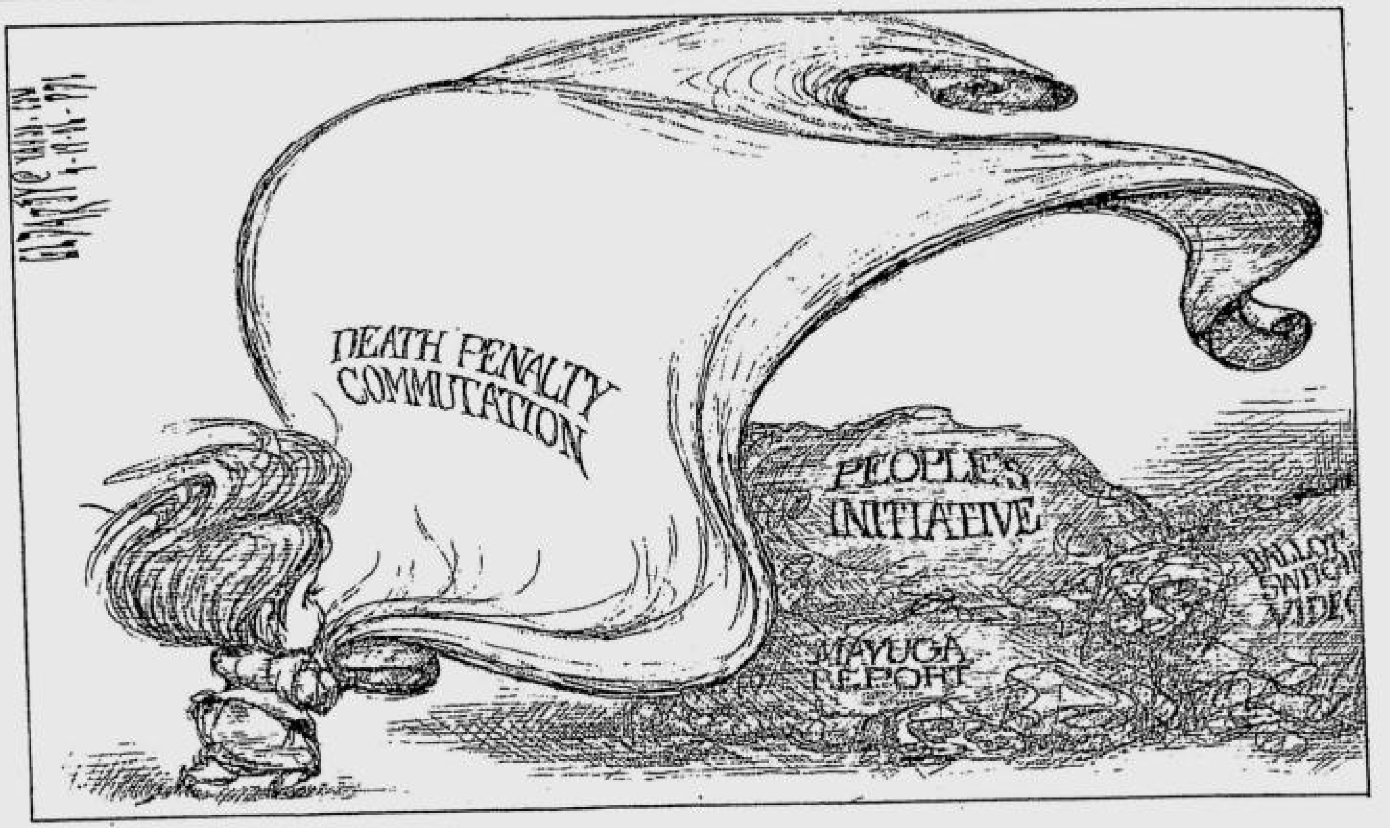
These officers are presumably not out of the woods yet, though the generals obviously are. The Mayuga report says there are some lower-ranking officers who will face further investigation for allegedly unprofessional conduct during the May 2004 elections.

While Mayuga has forcefully defended the integrity of the process over which he presided and appealed for the public to note that he was not interested in making judgments but only in ascertaining "facts," the fact remains that public perception of the purpose of the investigation was to identify and punish officers accused of participating in electoral fraud. Mayuga does not deny the possibility of fraud, but his team has firmly limited it to a lower level and a smaller scale than the original accusations and suspicions.

Just as the fact-finding body was formed in the wake of allegations so scandalous as to cause not just public complaints but disaffection within the ranks of the AFP, its findings come at a time when the only thing that has prevented an escalation of the issue has been the President's executive order forbidding civilians and the military from facing congressional investigations without her permission. The permission has not been forthcoming in instances involving questions over the conduct of elections, and the officers who have disobeyed the President's order have been court-martialed with a speed that should at least have been matched by the undertakings—and release of the findings—of the Mayuga committee.

What has been left unsaid is that the Mayuga report was delayed because it was impolitic to release its findings during the turbulent months leading to February. By all accounts, the administration was taken aback by the scale of opposition to it within the ranks of the military. The Mayuga report, not because of its contents but precisely because of the lack of it, would have been too much at the time.

But times have obviously changed, which is why, though risky, the release of the report was timed to minimize any such political risk. The problem is that it leaves too many questions unanswered.



Dying town and river can still be saved

(Continued from last Monday)

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO MALABON—progress actually killing the charm and personality of old towns—is happening to many other towns in the Philippines, especially those near the urban areas like Metro Manila. Factories, one sign of alleged "progress," have killed the two rivers running through Malabon, as well as many other rivers, including Pasig. Something should be done to save them while there is still time.

With the death of the rivers also died the many fishponds that Malabon used to be famous for and that gave it its own peculiar beauty and charm, space and fresh air. If you are near a fishpond, the air is always cool and fresh, the wind is always blowing, night and day you hear the wavelets lapping at the banks of the ponds, and you smell the sweet smell of salt water mixed with the smell of the algae that the milkfish feed on.

Now all of that is gone. When the wind blows, all you smell is the stink of the polluted river; you can't swim in it anymore or you'd die of poisoning. And you don't hear the lapping of the waves in the ponds anymore. In fact, you rarely see any pond anymore; they have been filled up (along with parts of the river) and squatter shanties have been built on them. Shanties and factories have replaced the mangrove stands that used to line both banks of the river, all adding their filth to the already polluted water.

During the town fiesta, there were processions of statues of saints on land and water, with the fluvial parades of the Catholic Church and the Aglipayan Church competing with each other in the beauty and design of their pagodas. On the feast of San Juan, the people took to the rivers again with grand fluvial parades and water games. Now they can't do that anymore. If they went into the river now, it would be like going into an open sewer.

When the rivers overflow their banks during the flood season, the filthy water goes to the streets, into the yards and even into the homes, and stays on and on for days. In the old days, the rivers also overflowed during spring tides, but those were times for merrymaking instead of revulsion because the water was clean. Children played in the water in the streets and yards, and the water went away when the tide went out. Now the streets are flooded when it rains even if the tide is low.

Why is this happening? Because there is no place for the excess water to go. The fishponds have been filled up and converted into subdivisions. Dagatdagatan, which used to be a big beautiful lake that was a catch basin for excess water, was filled up and converted into a housing project, now a growing slum. The river is now shallow because of siltation and can hold less water. Land grabbers are stealing parts of the river, filling them up, building houses on them and having them titled in their names.

The question is, why did the town's leaders allow this to happen? Why did the succession of mayors and other officials not try to stop the degradation of their once-beautiful town? Why did its people allow it? Instead of fighting its slow decay, many of the old families have left and moved to other more livable places. You can hardly find a restaurant selling genuine *pancit Malabon* in Malabon anymore. *Patis* -making, for which Malabon used to be famous, is also dying. Now we import fish sauce from Vietnam and Thailand.

A saving grace is that some of the old rich families have been able to preserve their grand old houses on the main street. But there are many others in the process of decay. The National Historical Commission and the national and local governments should help preserve and restore them, as many other countries are doing to their old towns. These restored and preserved towns, especially in the United States and Europe, are now popular tourist spots. (In fact, the government should do more to help preserve the old houses of Vigan and Taal.)

The Tenejeros-Tullahan River, in which many boys of my generation (and our horses) used to spend so many happy times, can still be saved. Both ends of the river open up into the sea. The regular high and low tides can wash out the pollution in due time—provided the factories and squatters' homes lining its banks stop throwing their effluents and other waste into it. But they will not do that on their own. The national and local governments, and responsible members of the community, have to make them do it.

There is a plan to build levees on both banks of the river to prevent it from overflowing its banks. They have been talking about it for a long time, but that's about what they have done so far: talk. There is no sign that the levees would be built soon, although funding has been assured by the Japanese government. If finally constructed, I think they would be one of the things than can save Malabon.

Even if they are unable to prevent the floods, at least the levees would provide Malabon with two more streets, if they would be built wide enough. That will provide the city with two riverside boulevards running from Manila Bay to Bulacan. Perhaps Malabon and Valenzuela can have Riverwalks similar to Manila's Baywalk.

That would achieve a number of things besides boosting domestic tourism. It would stop land grabbers from encroaching on the river, remove squatters from the riverbanks and stop them and factories from discharging their wastes into the river, raise the value of real estate along the river, and therefore increase the income from real estate tax of the two cities. Then an urban renewal program will make them look like real cities.

Ten things to love about being in the Philippines

(Conclusion)

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

SIX, DVD AND SOFTWARE. IT USED TO BE you went to the United States to buy DVDs, software and books. Well, today you still go to the United States (and elsewhere) to buy books. I still remember the row upon row of bargain books in The Strand in New York, a cavernous book shop where you need a ladder to get to the tomes on the top shelves. Many of them were still new and hardbound. The DVDs, well, the last time I got them in the United States was in 2001, shortly before 9/11, and I counted myself lucky to have bought them on sale.

Today, you do not go to the United States to buy DVDs; your folks in the United States come here to buy DVDs. Or importune you to send them some, such as your messenger is intrepid enough to risk problems at Immigration. Indeed, today your problem is not how to lay your hands on DVDs, or on good titles, your problem is how to organize the tons of them, including absolute classics, that are piling up in your not very big house. I have solved that problem by buying them without the case and storing them in canisters. I still have to solve the problem of how to find the time to watch them.

Those who feel like berating me for listing the DVDs from Quiapo among the things that make this country livable might first wish to examine whether the Windows they're using to boot their PCs and the software they're using to write their furious letters with are original or licensed.

Seven, **Quiapo**. Before my mother suffered a stroke some years ago, which much debilitated her mind if not her body, she used to go to Quiapo to do her marketing. She was born and raised in Manila. The fact that many markets, wet or super, were near did little to dissuade her from making the long trip by jeepney. She was already past her 80s then, but she was strong and strong-willed. Nothing beats Quiapo for the real deal, she said.

She was right. It was so then, it is so now. It's the one place where you get the best bang for the buck, in more ways than one.

It's a place, too, where you find tolerance amid difference, pattern amid incongruity, order amid chaos. It's the place where the Quiapo church stands just across the street from the mosque. It's the place where the sounds of prayer mingle with the cries of barkers, where bankers thrive with sellers of snake oil, where the benefits promised by public officials vie with the efficacious results promised by the peddlers of *pampalaglag*. It's grimy, noisy and pushy. It's honest, colorful and sublime.

Eight, the **countryside**. That is to say, any place outside Metro Manila, not necessarily your hometown. The food is cheaper and the smiles are broader. In past years, I used to travel a lot across the country to talk in graduations and forums but I have kept to Manila of late because of pressing concerns. I like visiting the Visayas for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is accessible by air and sea. But more than that, the Spaniards were right: it's the land of the *pintados*, of a people given to wine and song. I won't mention what goes along with wine and song lest I get into trouble as well.

Of course, it's not always easy to keep an Amorsolo image of the countryside amid the want and strife to be found there. But you'd be a fool to imagine that's all you'll find in the countryside. Especially in summer, when the sun dangles from a cloudless sky and shimmers across undulating field and heaving sea. It's always a little brighter in the countryside in summer, which pulls you to it like, well, an Amorsolo painting.

Nine, ***kakanin, halo-halo***. When I was a kid, you found the *kakanin* (pudding, rice cakes, etc.) plentifully in the market. But if you were too lazy to take the short walk there, there were the itinerant vendors who hawked the stuff in the streets. I recall that at one point one of our teachers in high school, an American Jesuit, who had been insisting that we speak slowly, audibly and clearly in class, pointed triumphantly to one of those itinerant vendors and cried, "That is how you should recite!" You could hear the voice of the kid from a distance shouting "*Baduya*" (banana drenched in batter) in the tones of an angel. *Kakanin's* gain, amateur hour's loss.

Two things I've always associated with summer: *tuli* (circumcision) and *halo-halo*. The first came from announcements in newspapers and signs in streets that said almost cryptically, "Summertime: Tuli!" To this day, I find myself saying that phrase every time Gershwin's famous ode to summertime is sung. The second is *halo-halo*, a concoction that makes you see and feel the haze of summer. Not least because it truly makes you full and sleepy. I know most of the ingredients there—beans of all shapes and sizes—are gout-inducing, but I figure that these days in particular there are more things to give you pain in this country than gout.

Ten, **the people**. I still recall something a friend of mine, an American banker, told me before he left for another post. He had pretty much gone around the world, he said, but he found few people as genuinely warm and solicitous as Filipinos. Of course, in excessive form, he said, Filipinos also tended to be familiar and intrusive, as when new acquaintances went on to pry into his personal life. But even that he found to be largely harmless, if not well-meaning. In the United States, he said, waiters and sales clerks greeted you, "Have a good day," but there was little joy or conviction in their eyes. Here, people said "*Ingat*," and meant it.

I did think of writing as well "10 things to hate about being in the Philippines." But either that goes well past 10 or it can be reduced to just one, take your pick.

But that's quite another story. It's Easter, I'll leave the tragedies for tomorrow.

Old debate reopened

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE COMMUTATION LAST WEEK OF THE death sentences on 1,205 convicts awaiting execution has reopened a politically contentious debate over capital punishment in the Philippines, one of the 74 countries in the world that have retained the death penalty. At the end of 2005, 122 countries had abolished capital punishment, following a global trend since 1977, when the number of abolitionist countries stood at 16.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo in her Easter message announced the commutation of the death sentences to life imprisonment, it carried both religious symbolism and an implicit message of a possible policy shift toward the abolition of capital punishment. The announcement provoked mixed reactions from various sectors, including the Catholic Church, human rights lobby groups, anti-crime organizations, victims of heinous crimes (offenses covered by the Death Penalty Law), lawyers and political groups, notably opposition leaders who read in it a shrewd political move to deflect the issue of the people's initiative to revise the Constitution.

In fact, the Filipino people, during the Holy Week, had a respite from the already sterile Cha-cha debate. They had switched their attention to the sensational debate that rocked Christendom as it commemorated the Crucifixion of Christ over the recently discovered "Gospel of Judas," casting the most reviled traitor in history in less villainous light.

The wide reaction to the presidential announcement revealed not so much how controversial the President has become as how contentious is the issue of capital punishment. What provoked the new debate was the fact that since Ms Arroyo imposed a moratorium on the execution of convicts in 2001, the Easter announcement marked the biggest batch of commutations she had ever made. Traditionally, Easter and Christmas are the two seasons of the year when the President exercises executive clemency.

In her Easter message, the President said, "As we celebrate Jesus' Resurrection, I wish to announce that we are changing our policy on those who have been imposed the death penalty to life imprisonment. We are reducing their penalty to life imprisonment."

The phrase "we are changing our policy" suggested that the President was using the commutation of sentences as a springboard for initiating legislation that would abolish capital punishment. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye gave the Easter message a stronger meaning when he said that the President would push for the repeal of Republic Act No. 7659 (the Death Penalty Law), which has been in place since 1994, "if necessary," to give substance to "the forgiveness and compassion" that she extended in her message.

These statements immediately alarmed pro-death penalty groups, among them the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption whose members include survivors of heinous crimes and the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order. The MRPO has campaigned actively against the repeal of the Death Penalty Law on behalf of members of the Chinese community who were victims of kidnapping for ransom, classified as a heinous crime under RA 7659. These two groups did not offer new arguments and evidence to support their old line that capital punishment is a deterrent to heinous crimes. The VACC offered an irrelevant argument that the President acted as if she were "the judiciary and the legislature" and that the commutation was motivated by a desire to please the Catholic Church and the European Union, while the MRPO went off tangent by accusing her of "wholesale disregard of the law."

Some lawyers have attacked the President for "complete disregard of the Supreme Court in her decision to summarily move to commute all death penalties to life imprisonment." They said the commutation was an affront to the Constitution and Congress because it ran roughshod over the principle of separation of powers among the three branches.

The commutation of the death sentences reopened old divisions over the death penalty issue. Human rights groups applauded it while Catholic bishops did not enthusiastically respond to it as a collegial body, with only some bishops lauding it. If the commutation was intended to win the political support of the Catholic hierarchy, which has been campaigning vigorously for the repeal of the Death Penalty Law, there was no sign it had mellowed the position of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines which, days before the President's announcement, had issued a pastoral letter criticizing the administration-sponsored campaign to collect signatures to back a petition to revise the Constitution through a people's initiative.

What seems certain is that the commutation has rekindled the move to repeal the Death Penalty Law. It increased the clamor of human rights groups for the President to exert more effort to abolish the death penalty by pressing Congress to pass a new law. That such legislation has languished in the legislature is proof of its being too contentious even for members of Congress. The fact that the President has not certified the draft legislation as urgent indicates that she is hesitant to make it a defining issue for her administration, which is battling for its life over the issues of legitimacy and constitutional change. Unless she presses Congress to pass the repeal legislation, the Easter message will remain a pious gesture. But the repeal of the law carries political costs.

Talking about the 'Code'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AN IMAGINED CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO people, a man and a woman, one of whom has read "The Da Vinci Code," and another who hasn't but, based on word-of-mouth, has decided the book and the forthcoming movie are the work of Satan, no less. For convenience, I'm giving them the names Leonarda and Leonardo.

LEONARDO (Spotting a paperback copy of "The Da Vinci Code" on Leonarda's coffee table): I can't believe you read this trash! Don't you know that just reading the works of Dan Brown is an occasion for sin?

LEONARDA: Really? I don't remember a single sex scene in the novel! Unless of course you count the ecstasy the monk-assassin experiences as he tightens the barbed wire around his leg!

LEONARDO: It's called a cilice, for your information, and the practice is known as "discipline." Some saints, including the environmentalists' favorite, St. Francis of Assisi, are said to have regularly used corporal mortification.

LEONARDA: OK, you don't have to get all huffy on me! But come on, how can you say I'm committing a sin just by reading a book? I mean, even Dan Brown says what he wrote was a work of fiction, and while he claims he did a lot of research, he's not making any claims about historical accuracy or even theological soundness.

LEONARDO: But if you claim to be a Catholic, even a Christian, you should be offended because Brown attacks the very fundamentals of our faith!

LEONARDA: Like what?

LEONARDO: Oh, little things like Jesus Christ may not have really been the Son of God, only a wealthy preacher with political ambitions. Or that he had sex with Mary Magdalene and was actually married to her and had a child with her. Or that the Catholic Church had Jesus' and Mary Magdalene's offspring murdered to cut the divine bloodline!

LEONARDA: Oh, those! I don't think readers really took those allegations seriously. But you must admit they're tantalizing questions that deserve at least a moment's consideration.

* * *

LEONARDO: That's the problem with people like you. You buy a best-selling novel with a thrilling plot and willingly fall into the world the author creates, without thinking for a moment that he may be playing with your mind and manipulating your emotions.

LEONARDA: It's called suspension of disbelief, dummy! And we learned it in high school! How can one read—and enjoy—a work of fiction and not fall willingly into the writer's imagined world? However offensive, it's a world that was created by the writer for the reader, and we play along, at least while we're reading him, or her. Playing with our minds and manipulating our emotions are what artists do all the time, and we let them, because most of us just don't have the resources of imagination or creativity to create worlds of our own.

LEONARDO: That's all very well for you lit majors...

LEONARDA: I'm not, you know ... in fact, I majored in economics!

LEONARDO: Well, at least you have a college degree. You can think for yourself, you're part of the educated class! But what about those who're too ignorant or innocent to read "The Da Vinci Code" and regard its claims with a grain of salt? How about them?

* * *

LEONARDA: Well, first of all, "The Da Vinci Code" is not exactly *komiks*, or *pang-masa* reading. And aren't you a bit insulting the more than 40 million folks who've read the book so far? If every one of them took Brown's claims seriously, don't you think we'd be seeing at least a few million of them walking out of the Church and renouncing their Christianity?

LEONARDO: Maybe not with the book, but what about the movie? I really hope the MTRCB listens to the anti-pornography group's petition to ban the movie. If the book was offensive and dangerous, what more the movie, which would be seen by even more people, people who don't read!

LEONARDA: Yeah, I heard about that petition. They said that showing the movie was unconstitutional, of all things!

LEONARDO: *Akala ko ba matalino ka?* Of course, it's unconstitutional! It violates the freedom of religion!

LEONARDA: Well, if the MTRCB bans "The Da Vinci Code," it would be violating my freedom of choice, of information and the moviemakers' freedom of expression. What are they so afraid of?

LEONARDO: I told you—the book and the movie undermines Christianity and threatens the faith of the average Christian!

* * *

LEONARDA: I have a news flash for you: I think you have far less faith in other people's faith or in your own!

LEONARDO: And you have an unfounded confidence in other people's intelligence!

LEONARDA: I think I know what really gets your goat about "The Da Vinci Code"! It's not that it questions Christ's divinity, but because it promotes worship of the "divine feminine"! You also hate the thought that a woman was actually chosen by Christ as head of his Church—until her leadership was undermined by the male apostles, that is.

LEONARDO: That's what I mean by readers going off on ridiculous tangents just from reading the book! But just to humor you... Do you really think Christ would have chosen a woman, even if she were his wife, as his successor?

LEONARDA: Why not? One of his central messages, wasn't it, was that all of us, men and women, are all children of God, equal inheritors of the Kingdom?

LEONARDO: If so, why did he choose 12 men for his apostles? Men were meant to take on positions of leadership, while women are good only for serving meals and waiting on the men!

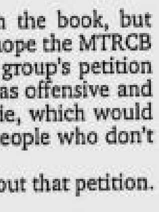
LEONARDA: Hmmph! Just as your favorite school thinks physical activity is unseemly for girls, and that's why it banned girls' soccer! Or why another of your favorite schools banned mothers, yayas and sisters from the school grounds because they might get scandalized by the sight of boys changing clothes!

LEONARDO: Women are so illogical! I thought we were talking about "The Da Vinci Code"? Aaargh!

Imported goods

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



ECONOMICS WAS NOT ONE OF MY FAVORITE subjects, maybe because numbers, equations and any form of computation make my knees tremble. My relatives are all business-minded, which makes me the mutant in the family. Everyone knows I became a historian because I couldn't cope with math. But going through the two-volume work of Jean Mallat on the Philippines published in 1846, I was perversely attracted to the last section that had several pages filled with stale economic data: tax and tariff tables, trade figures, etc. I realized that focusing on the articles being exchanged between the Philippines and other countries, while ignoring the numbers, still told me a lot about people and trade in those times and, by comparison, ours.

In 1841, for example, France bought from the Philippines coffee, sugar, indigo, hides, cigars, turtle shell, sapan wood (whatever that is). In return, France exported cloth, wines and various merchandise, including paper and clothes. The United Kingdom, from 1831-1840, imported from the Philippines non-refined sugar, raw hemp and Cassia lignea (described as "imitation cinnamon"). The United Kingdom also got indigo, wool, manufactured tobacco and straw hats (I wonder which part of the Philippines exported wool). In return, the United Kingdom sent to the Philippines wool, cotton, linen and hemp.

The commerce with China seemed to have been quite lively. This was a long trading relationship that went back to pre-colonial times to at least the 9th century. In 1841, Chinese traders brought to Manila linen and silk cloth, raw silk, tea, stationery, umbrellas, hardware, stoneware and porcelain, edibles and other articles not described in the trading table provided by Mallat. Manila exported to China gold dust, swallow's nests, indigo, sea cucumber, cotton, rice, edibles, silk cloths, currency and "other articles." (One wonders why pearls are not included or even hemp, as if the Chinese didn't need rope.)

The Philippines also traded with Portuguese Macao and sent 25 ships annually and not just from the main trading ports of Manila and Zamboanga. Macao had a concession and could conduct trade from Pasacao, Sorsogon, Capiz and Currimao. Manila sent to Macao *balate*, *salanganes* nests, *zibi* (dried shrimp), buffalo hide, log wood, cotton, deer sinews called *nervios de venao*, shark's fin, ebony wood, molave, nacre, liquid indigo or *tintoron* and gold dust.

There must be some pattern in all these lists, some sense in seemingly useless information.

My interest in underwater archeology now being undertaken by the National Museum made me take a second look at the Chinese exports to the Philippines. I'm sure this didn't vary very much from the 9th to the 19th centuries. When the National Museum or some unwary fishermen come across a sunken vessel, the items that survived time and salt water are usually porcelain (often encrusted with coral) and, of course, metal and wood. It is unfortunate that due to the demand of the antiquities market, poachers take all the commercially viable items like porcelain and leave out the other things that will make us understand trade between China and the Philippines a thousand years ago.

Fortunately, the obsessive-compulsive Mallat took the trouble to list down the cargo of a Chinese sampan that entered the port of Manila during his stay. The list is quite long and can be boring if read straight through, so I took out the items that appear interesting to give you an idea what the Chinese knew or thought the Filipinos wanted to buy:

Food is on the top of my list and here we see: 261 covered jars of garlic and salted radish, 8 piculs of agua mala (this translates as "bad water" and I wonder what this is), 204 gantas of Chinese oil, 1,140 gantas of red rice, 2 piculs of Chinese anise, 20 piculs dried fish, 50 baskets of chestnuts, 15 katis of liquorice juice, 3 piculs of banana flowers, 568 hams, 1 *caban* (sack) of dried apples, 490 katis of different kinds of tea, 2 piculs of rum, 1,990 katis of small sweet oranges, 3 cabans of nuts, 200 piculs of *sutanju* [obviously, vermicelli or *sotanghon*], and 12,000 pears.

Naturally, other goods related to food were not far behind. The sampan also carried 11,000 bamboo *sipit* (obviously chopsticks), 330 dishes of blue porcelain, 250 kinds of varnished pottery, 250 small wooden spoons, 56 iron spoons, 20 small bamboo baskets, 44 small boxes made of Chinese crockery, 57 stone (granite?) mills for grinding, 1,600 sharpening stones (*pang hasa* we call them, but strangely no knives and cleavers are mentioned in the inventory), 600 small green earthenware plates (*cladon?*), 12,832 large white porcelain plates (*bandejados* we call them), 81 different shapes of white porcelain plates, 715 small green jars, 3,420 small black jars of different kinds, 51,661 blue crockery plates, 11,500 tinderboxes complete with fire, 220 small soup plates of bluish porcelain, 57 jars of blue crockery, 60,000 cups of different kinds, 80 copper pots, 137 species of bowls with handles, 189 earthenware jars, and finally 3 jugs of the best quality.

All of the above explain the Chinese influence in our food but they don't explain why only 100 toothbrushes were exported to Manila compared to 820 ear picks and 108 spittoons of green pottery. Now that's a puzzle.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Who we are

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

IT ISN'T JUST IN THE PHILIPPINES WHERE THE DEBATE over the death penalty has been revived. Last week, for instance, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops issued an Easter pastoral letter calling for the abolition of the death penalty.

The United States and Japan are, currently the only developed countries where capital punishment is still used. The United States is often singled out for studies because, like the Philippines, it abolished the death penalty in 1972, only to bring it back in 1976.

Not all the American states have brought back capital punishment, and debates continue with many issues. I'm summarizing some of the issues here:

The first is that of fairness. Opponents of the death penalty have pointed out that there is a certain arbitrariness to the use of capital punishment. In the United States, about 2 percent of convicted murderers are sentenced to death. Turning the tables around, one could argue that if the death penalty were truly a form of just punishment, then all convicted murderers should be executed.

That will never happen of course, and, worse, the chances of being meted out the death penalty, and of the sentence being carried out, increase if one is poor, and an African-American or Hispanic-American.

I am certain that if we looked at our own Death Row, we would find that most of the convicts are from the lower socio-economic strata, and if we look at the ones who have been executed, the percentage of the poor would rise even higher.

Another way of discussing this fairness issue is to look at how we protest whenever a Filipino is sentenced to death abroad. Yet, using the argument of fairness, we really cannot argue against the execution of Filipinos overseas if we continue to impose the death penalty here at home.

A second issue is that of justice, which is different from fairness. Here, the issue is whether capital punishment sometimes results in the execution of the innocent. With advances in forensics and DNA analysis, more and more cases of wrongful conviction have been uncovered in the United States.

This issue often overlaps with that of fairness in the sense that wrongful convictions are more likely to involve the poor and non-whites.

The possibility of wrongful convictions is high in the Philippines. Between 1997 and 2003, the Supreme Court reviewed about 730 death sentences, and in almost 500 cases, the sentences were reduced or remanded. Sixty of those who had been sentenced to death were actually acquitted. If DNA tests were made available, I suspect many more cases would have been overturned.

A third issue is that of deterrence. Death penalty advocates say that executions bring down the crime rate. The US data show otherwise. In the northeastern states, where the death penalty is almost never used, murder rates are about 4.2 per 100,000 population. In the south, which accounts for 80 percent of executions, the murder rate is 6.6 per 100,000, the highest in the country.

In the Philippines, the role of the death penalty in deterring crime is probably even more insignificant, mainly because the biggest criminals know they are untouchable. As small-time drug pushers and kidnapping hirelings languish in prisons, waiting for the lethal injection, the syndicate heads, the politicians who plunder the economy, go scot free. Criminals know that crime pays in the Philippines, with or without the death penalty.

Terrorism

The American debate over the death penalty found new focus recently with the case of Zacarias Moussaoui, a French national of Moroccan descent who was convicted for terrorism in connection with the terrorist attacks in Washington, D.C. and New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. The jury is still undecided whether to recommend the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Moussaoui was actually arrested in August 2001, a month before the terrorist attacks. Immigration agents apprehended him after he tried to get a flight school to teach him how to fly a commercial airliner. He was convicted on the argument that he had refused, after his arrest, to divulge information about his terrorist connections. If he had done so, the prosecution argued, maybe the twin towers bombing could have been prevented.

Public opinion seems to favor the conviction, and probably even a death sentence, because the 9/11 attacks were so heinous. It didn't help that Moussaoui showed no remorse during the trial. He described as "gorgeous" the smoking ruins of the Trade Center, and said the attackers were now probably "in the highest level of paradise."

The defense has argued that Moussaoui is mentally unstable, probably a schizophrenic. He is the son of a violent alcoholic father and a mother who left him and his siblings with others for child care. Al-Qaida members themselves said Moussaoui was considered too unreliable and was being reserved for a second wave of attacks.

John Farmer, senior counsel to a special commission created to investigate the 9/11 attacks, has argued that Moussaoui should not be executed since he was not a leader of al-Qaida, and did not actually participate in the terrorist attacks. Another angle he uses is that executing Moussaoui would be a form of assisted suicide, one which would allow him to claim martyrdom.

Evil

The Moussaoui case should make us think hard about the death penalty in the Philippines. A death sentence, an execution, could bring some sense of justice to several thousands in the Moussaoui case. For society, the execution becomes part of a morality play, where the state can claim that it is meting out justice—with hopes that this will deter crime.

Death-penalty advocates refer to the need to deal with evil, but John Farmer offers another perspective when he writes: "Zacarias Moussaoui is evil, and there is no doubt that he arrived here determined to kill Americans, but he was not a leader of al-Qaida." Moreover, Farmer argues for life imprisonment so that Moussaoui can die in prison "frustrated and forgotten, embittered and anonymous."

Farmer makes a good point about the kind of justice Moussaoui deserves. When we lash out at those who have wronged us, we justify our actions by saying we are dealing with evil. That argument is being used by the US government itself, when American soldiers torture and degrade suspected Islamist militants. But an American legislator looking into alleged brutality against the suspected Islamists summarized the issues well when he said that human rights, even for those we perceive to be evil, have to be respected: "It's not about who they are, but about who we are."

US Catholic bishops put it another way: "The use of state-authorized killing in our names diminishes us all." In the name of restoring justice, we all lose part of our humanity whenever we condone an execution, whether in the lethal injection chamber or through salvaging or extra-legal means.

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Oh, Woman

I WISH TO EXPRESS MY REFLECTIONS on last month's (March) focus—the Woman—with questions and answers.

1. How did woman come into being? By creation. When Adam had no one to talk to about his awe at the beauty that God had surrounded him with; to listen to his hymns of praise that he sang to his Creator; to share his offerings of gratitude for the gifts that God had showered on him; he became restless, moody, silent. Observing him, God said: "It is not good for man to be alone." So while Adam slept, he plucked a rib—the most tender bone from his torso—and uniquely formed Woman, the last creature of His Creation with the command, "Go and multiply."

2. Of all parts of the body, why did God choose the rib? Because the rib hides and protects the most tender organ—the heart—from which springs forth profound understanding, enduring patience, warm tenderness, overflowing compassion and unconditional love present in most women, with a few exceptions.

In the "good old days" Woman was sized up as alluring, fragile, weak. She needed a staff to lean on—Man.

Nowadays, women are beginning to assert their God-given asset—to run a home away from home. Women lawyers of today are silently exercising their expertise of the law to protect our marginalized, voiceless, moneyless countrywomen from being battered, sexually abused and stigmatized as a burden to society. Assuredly, their reward is greater in heaven than on earth.

The most telling situation that revealed the best and worst qualities in women is the biblical story of two women who stood before King Solomon with a baby boy between them. Each claimed she was the mother of the child. After listening to them, the king ordered the child to be cut into two parts, so that each may have a portion of the child. One woman, the real mother, said: "O my Lord, give her the living child. Do not kill him." The other said: "Let him be neither mine nor yours. Divide him." So the king ordered the child to be given to the woman who did not want the child to be killed.

Our nation's governance now is likened to this situation. Which claimant truly, sincerely, unconditionally loves this poverty-stricken, corruption-polluted smugglers' haven and country of ours?

God is watching. God is listening. God loves us Filipinos but, remember, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

—ROSARIO R. LIBERATO

Helpless vs overpricing drugstores but not against political dissidents

HISTORY REALLY REPEATS ITSELF. Sixteen years ago, I complained about the overpricing of drugs in Daet, Camarines Norte. A local drugstore had sold me six capsules of Amoxicillin 500 mg overpriced by 200 percent. I was terribly shocked, but the Department of Health was toothless and could not do anything about it except to ask the drugstore to give me a refund, which I rejected.

On April 5, 2006, I bought three capsules of Amoxicillin 500 mg at another local drugstore for P37. Unfortunately, I misplaced the medicine, together with the computer receipt for that purchase—for which reason I was not able to take the medicine that day. So the following morning, April 6, 2006, I purchased six capsules of Amoxicillin 500 mg at another drugstore for only P36.60.

Can't the DOH run after drugstores for overpricing?

It is high time that overpricing drugstores were punished, otherwise they would continue to prey on people, especially the poor and marginalized, not only in Daet but throughout the country. If only the government uses its police powers in curbing acts of cheating with as much political will as it does in going after demonstrators and the rebellious elements of society!

—TRINIDAD ESTURAS PETEZA,
JP Rizal Street,
Barangay Camambugan,
Daet, Camarines Norte 4600

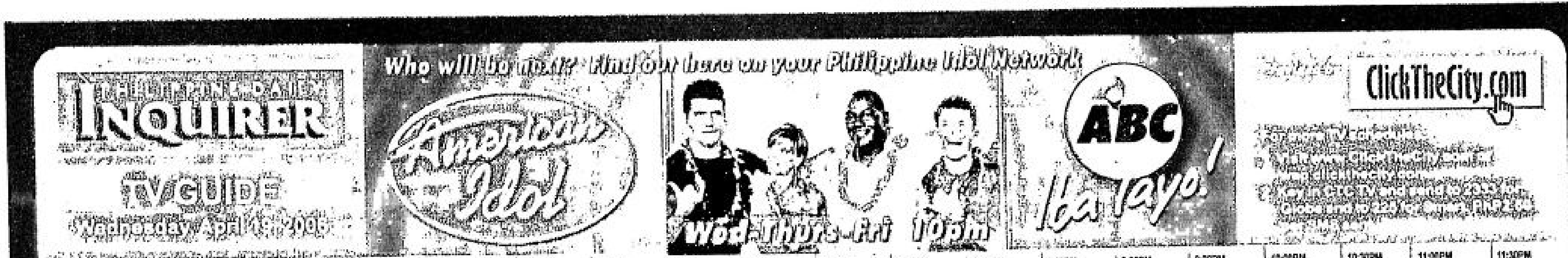
Enlightening Inquirer articles

MY FRIENDS AND I LOOK FORWARD to read in the INQUIRER more features that will help clear the confusion created by "The Da Vinci Code" and similar subjects.

We liked the articles that appeared on the front page of the April 3 and April 9 issues of the INQUIRER—about Catholic groups bracing themselves for "Da Vinci attacks" (April 3); and on the proper way to understand what is meant by the so-called newly discovered "gospel" (April 9); and on a supplement page, a book review about "Opus Dei" (April 10).

—MIGUEL RENOVADO,
miguelrenovado@yahoo.com

Will keep you posted.—Ed.


THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday, April 19, 2006
Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Iba Tayo!
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)	National Geographic	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Billboard On-Air	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Panday	Princess Lulu		S.O.C.O.			Insider
AXN		CSI: NY (Season 2)		Next Action Star		The Amazing Race (Season IX)		Sakura Wars	Sakura Wars	PSI Factor (Season 3)		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	The Amazing Race (Season IX)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		CSI: Miami (Season 3)	
Cartoon Network	Police Academy	Richie Rich	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	PokeMon	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel		Powerpuff Girls		Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One		Markang Rehas				Batang PX				Palaban			Persona	Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo (9:10 PM)				First Time Like A Virgin	
Cinemax			The Pacifier (3:25 PM)		Beethoven (4:35 PM)			And Justice For All				Secret Window			The Nugget (9:35 PM)			Mad Max (11:15 PM)	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		The Closer		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	Body Of Evidence	Law & Order		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Sudden Impact				Bones	
Discovery Channel		Blueprint For Disaster		American Chopper		Sen Toku		Stormproof		Wild Discovery		Hour China		Great Quakes		Stormproof		World's Strangest UFO Stories	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/ Unstoppable Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven That's So Trendy Week	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon	Buzz on Maggie	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '05 BCA Open 9-Ball C'ships Finals		Pool World Pool Masters 2001		Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia	Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia	Motorsport Asia	Table Tennis '04 Sportsworld Championships	2005 Kaohsiung World Pool Championships		Sportscenter Asia		Sportscenter Asia	Classic Boxing: J. Frazier vs. O. Bonavena		Classic Boxing: F. Patterson vs. O. Bonavena		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars 2		Beauty & The Geek		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Faith In Motion	Truth In The Heart	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	Suffering And The Love Of God	EWTN Catholic Classic	The Church & The Poor: Building Bridges	Mother Angelica Live Classics		Daily Mass Live		Angelus (9:15 PM)	One In Their Hearts: Holiness Of Priesthood	Parable	Rome Reports	EWTN Presents	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royal Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	Le Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Jewel In The Palace		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel		McLeod's Daughters IV		Mary & Tim (4:05 PM)				Bewitched	The Nanny	Family Law III		Missing II		Judging Amy		H2O			[illegible] Army (11:45 PM)
HBO			13 Going On 30 (3:45 PM)				The Chronicles Of Riddick				Crimson Force			The Mambo Kings			The Big Bounce (10:40 PM)		
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Lifestyle		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Up Close And Personal		Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Heat		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV			My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Click	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	30 Minute Meals	Wolfgang Puck's	Sweet Dreams	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Martha		Fine Living Special		Intimate Portrait	
MTV Philippines		Laguna Beach		MTV Screen	Pop Inc.		2006 MAA Nominee Specials	MTV Hits		Get Spotted	Get Hitched	MTV Screen	Diary of Kanye at the Grammys	TRL		Laguna Beach		Brand New	MTV Hits
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Hunter Hunted		Interpol Investigates		Science Times		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		[illegible] World Nat Geographic Specials: Animal Climbers		Hunter Hunted Ko Ko Kalu (Stalked By Sharks)		Interpol Investigates	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Alas.	Dios Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila	Teledyaryo W/ Ray Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition				Bantay OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon				My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PDD			Fight Night 4				Tutuusin Mo Ng Buhay				Love At First Sight				[illegible] Hanggang Sa Huli				Drega
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		[illegible]	Irene	Noel	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	Now Na!		News On Q	Balitaan		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9	TV Shopping						Arangkada Extra Balita	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Iron Chef		Three Wishes		Extreme Makeover		Newswatch Now	Basketball Show		Kerygma
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports				WTA NASDAQ-100 Open Finals					NBA Jam	Sagupaan	BP Mtn Bike Tour 2	NBA TV 2000 NBA All-Star Game					Sportsdesk	Asian Badminton C'ships Finals	
Sports Plus				This Is The PGA Tour		Raceworld		FIFA Preview Series II	Wild Side	NBA Game Seattle vs Sacramento					NBA Game [illegible] Memphis				
Star Movies	Harley Davidson & The Marlboro Man			The Singing Detective				Bio-Dome (5:50 PM)			Miracle Of The Heart (7:25 PM)			Hidalgo				AVP: Alien Vs. Predator	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		American Idol		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	American Idol		Grey's Anatomy		Smallville		Seinfeld	American Idol
Studio 23	Bewitched	Masked Rider Ryuki				Batman Beyond		Spirits	TBA	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race Family Edition		CSI (8:20 PM)	24 Season 4 (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

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INQUIRER *Northern Luzon*

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Rolando B. Fernandez**

Mobile Internet café roams Batanes

By Grace Sarmiento-Clavecilla
Contributor

IN THE COUNTRY'S NORTHernmost province of Batanes, weaving *buntal* hats is a source of livelihood for the Ivatan people, who sell the products as souvenir items to tourists for P150 apiece.

In the Internet age, however, *buntal* makers need not be confined to a small local market.

"The design and craftsmanship of your *buntal* is very impressive. In fact, it is at par with the signature golf hats being sold by Australian professional golfer Greg Norman," said Information Technology Commissioner Virgilio Peña at a ceremony in the capital town of Basco last week.

"Through the worldwide web, your hat weavers can now exhibit your products to a bigger market. All you need is a website where you can display your products, and an e-mail address through which you can communicate with potential buyers and business partners," Peña said.

In the international market, he said, this same hat could be sold for $25 (P1,283) to $30 (P1,540), up to 10 times the local retail price.

Peña graced the launch of the new mobile Internet café service of Smart Communications. Called the Smart Click, the new facility is a 40-foot container van that has been converted into an airconditioned Internet café. It is equipped with 15 workstations connected to the Internet via high-speed wireless broadband service.

Peña said Internet facilities could be used by residents to link up with global markets.

Attraction of remoteness

It seems the very remoteness of Batanes (190 km from Aparri, Cagayan, the northernmost tip of mainland Luzon, or an 18-hour boat ride) has attracted the interest of telecommunications companies.

Smart, in particular, has repeatedly made Basco the site for launching or testing new services. Over the past four years, it has introduced to the province its satellite phone service, its GSM (global system for mobile communication) cellular phone service, and, recently, its wireless broadband Internet service and Internet education program for public schools.

Batanes first landed on the broadband map when public school teacher Florence Cielo of the Batanes National High School (BNHS) received a call on her cell phone from a Smart official in Metro Manila. Cielo is the school's computer laboratory manager and head of the technology and livelihood economics department.

"I was told that our school had been chosen to receive equipment, technical assistance, and one-year free broadband Internet connection, courtesy of the Smart schools program," Cielo said.

The program is a community service initiative designed to help public high school teachers and students learn how to tap the web as a learning resource. It provides broadband Internet connectivity, teacher training programs, and online content development programs.

The BNHS, which has more than 400 students, topped the province's National Achievement Tests (NAT) in 2004 and outscored its counterparts in the regional examinations.

It started accessing the Internet using satellite in 2003 as part of Microsoft Philippines' "Partners in Learning Program."

At that time, the school received 10 personal computers courtesy of the "PCs for Public High Schools Program" of the Department of Trade and Industry. The problem? The satellite Internet connection cost P19,500 a month.

"Could you just imagine the relief I felt when I got that call from Smart in June 2005? Not only are we getting some new desktop [computers], we're also getting free teacher training and Internet connectivity for a full year," Cielo said.

After the one-year grace period, the BNHS will start paying less than P2,000 a month for broadband Internet access. This is still a small amount compared to what they used to pay, Cielo said.

'Broadbanding' education

"Of course, there are cost savings. But more importantly, we can now accommodate more students in the computer laboratory because we have more desktops and all 20 of them are connected to high-speed Internet," she said.

The teachers are also benefiting from the wealth of information provided by the Internet.

"We have subjects for which we don't have readily available materials in the library. As you know, our resources in the library are very limited," Cielo said.

This is crucial when it comes to science lessons. With access to the worldwide web now made readily available, teachers no longer have to depend on outdated textbooks to come up with teaching aids. With a few clicks, they can present multimedia illustrations and lesson simulations.

Exposing the students to the benefits and use of information and communications technology has started to increase the demand for net access services, Cielo said.

To meet the growing demand for broadband Internet access in remote towns like Basco, Smart is now deploying mobile Internet cafés.

"We are convinced that there is a significant demand for Internet access and other communications services in remote municipalities, Smart Click is a very cost-effective solution," said Tina Mariano, head of Smart's Public Access Group.

Connected by wireless broadband links providing speeds of up to 1 mbps (megabits per second), Smart Click will serve as a neighborhood one-stop digital shop.

Program creates village of one-stop digital shops

Aside from renting out the 15 PCs in the shop, the mobile Internet cafés offer desktop publishing services, including printing and scanning of documents and photos.

Children and adults can also play online games and other entertainment features.

The café is also a communications center where people can connect with friends and relatives abroad via e-mail, fax, chat, or webcam (web camera).

"Smart Click can also serve as a community training facility where people can learn how to use computers and the Internet. We hope to help boost computer literacy in the countryside with the roll out of this project," Mariano said.

As of 2004, about 8 million people use the Internet in the Philippines, roughly equivalent to a 5.3-percent penetration rate. This is far below most Asian countries—lower than China (7.2 percent), Vietnam (7.1 percent) and Indonesia (6.5 percent).

The high cost or nonavailability of Internet access used to be a major constraint to the growth of Internet usage in the country. But that is now being addressed as telephone companies bring down Internet access prices and introduce more Internet network facilities in many parts of the country.

Grace Sarmiento-Clavecilla, a former reporter of Computerworld Philippines, now works as public affairs officer of Smart Communications.

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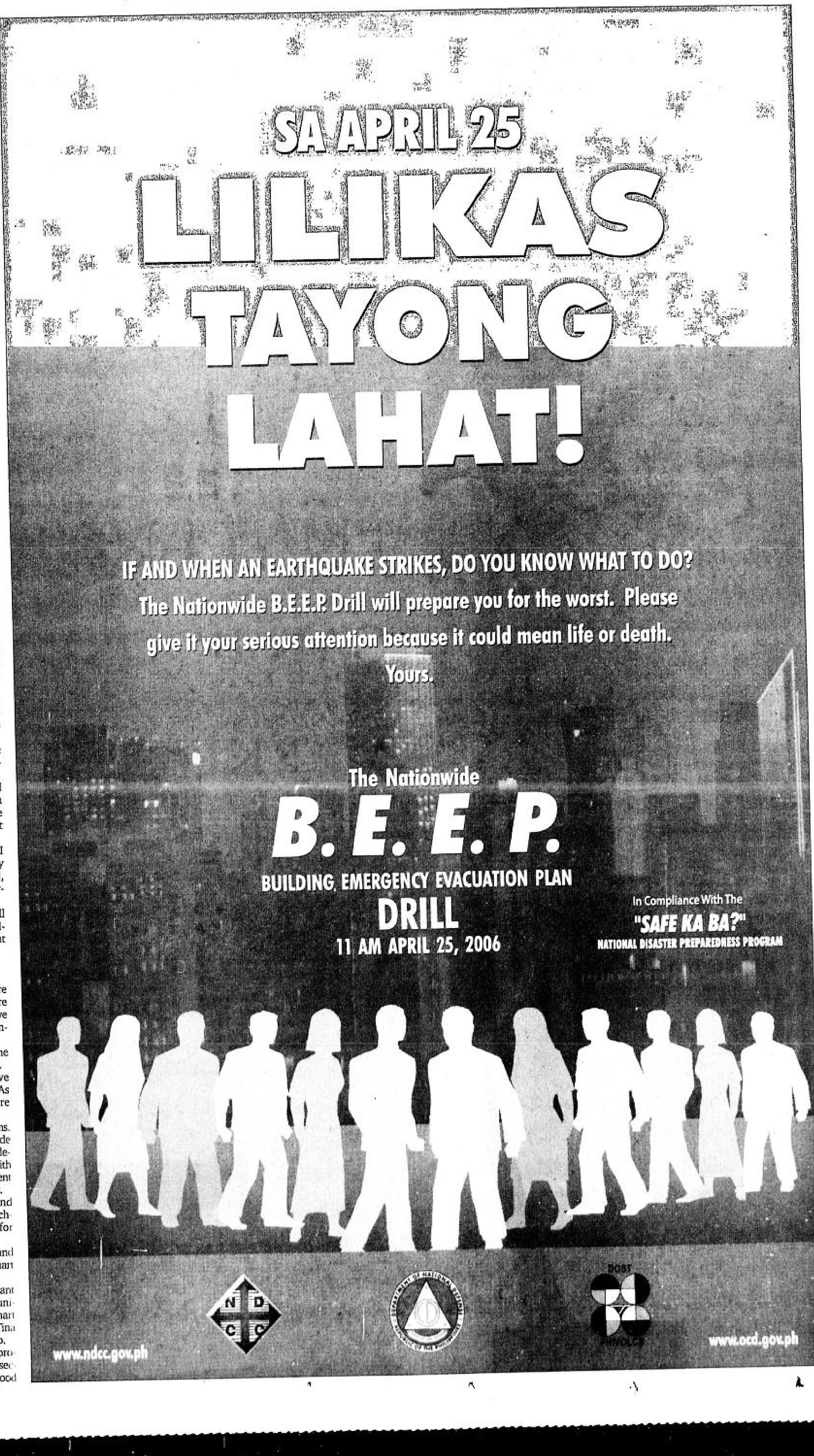

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Senator tagged in lobby for ₱300-M interchange

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Movie actor and Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid has been lobbying the Bases Conversion Development Authority for the building of an interchange under the Japanese-funded Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway project near his estate in Porac, Pampanga, two BCDA sources told the INQUIRER.

In seeking an interchange at Km 41 in Hacienda Dolores, Lapid was not only securing his private interest but also of a family that owns 700 has in the area, said the sources, who did not want to be named for fear of being entangled in the issue.

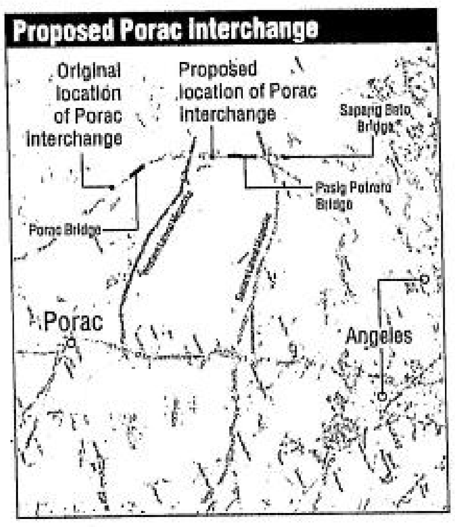
The senator's campaign, they claimed, had ranged him against Porac Mayor Exequiel Gamboa, who reportedly has been lobbying for a similar structure at Km 44 on behalf of another family with a 1,600-ha property.

Both sites are near the western FVR Megadike.

"So there's a dispute over where to locate the interchange," said one of the sources.

Reached through his mobile phone on Monday, Lapid denied wanting to personally benefit from the project or working on behalf of a landowner.

Proposed Porac Interchange


Original location of Porac Interchange
Proposed location of Porac Interchange
Sapang Bato Bridge
Pasig Potrero Bridge
Porac Bridge
Porac
Angeles

He said he was wrongly thought of working for the interest of a landowner he identified as "Triple L" because they bore the same initials.

"Mine is double L. Theirs is Triple L. I don't have anything to do with that. People tended to mix those up," he said.

A check by the INQUIRER with the Registry of Deeds showed that Lapid bought 15 lots with a total area of 68.9 has in Hacienda Dolores in 1984.

Titles showed he retained 30.1 has after mortgaging 14 lots shortly after Mt. Pinatubo's eruptions in 1991.

Lapid confirmed that he had asked the BCDA to build the structure at Km 41.

Speaking in Kapampangan, he said: "There was an interchange in the original plan but it was scrapped. There has to be an exit in Porac because my town and the rest of the second district of Pampanga are being left behind. That interchange will bring progress in the area. It can give access to Mt. Pinatubo, thereby boosting tourism there. We have a Kapampangan President, yet we could not even have an interchange in the area."

Retired general Narciso Abaya Jr., president of the state-owned BCDA, denied being pressured by the senator. "He never approached me," he said.

"As of now, the BCDA has no plan to put up an interchange along that stretch," Abaya told the INQUIRER.

According to him, the plan was scrapped when the government brought down the cost of the loan from P27 billion to P21 billion.

Abaya said there was "no reason" to build a P300-million interchange in Porac because traffic there was low and the connecting road was 6 km away from the suggested site.

The final design provided no interchange in the 35-km stretch from Dinalupihan town in Bataan to the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

The SCTEP is a 91-km toll road connecting the Subic Freeport in Zambales, the CSEZ and the Luisita Industrial Park in Tarlac.

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For more details contact: The PANA Secretariat
Unit 2D Torre de Salcedo, 184 Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City
Tel. No.: 894-0474 to 75; 894-0012 to 13 or email to email@pana.com.ph

PROGRAM

DAY 1 (April 20, Thursday)
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm – Role of Radio in the Advertising Media Mix
2:00 pm to 3:00 pm – Harnessing the Power of Radio

DAY 2 (April 21, Friday)
12:30 pm to 1:15 pm – The Print Advertising Process By: Mr. Gary Libby, VP for IT and Prepress, Phil. Daily Inquirer
1:15 pm to 2:00 pm – What Print Can Deliver for Clients; Successful Companies Which Grew Substantially Because of Print By: Ms. Hermie de Leon, President & CEO, Mediawise
2:00 pm to 2:45 pm - The Power or Unique Properties of Print By: Liezl Maralag, Managing Director, Starcom

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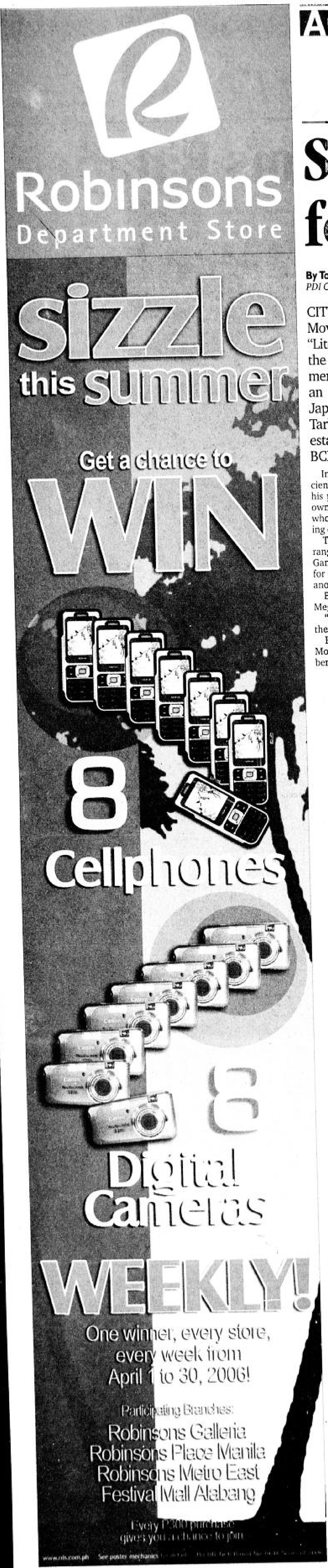
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Asthma cases traced to port quarry project

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—CITING rising cases of children suffering from asthma, Zambales Vice Gov. Ramon Lacbain II has asked the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority to order a stop to quarrying in a coastal village off Subic town by a firm supplying soil and stones to the agency's Japanese-funded port project.

Armand Arreza, SBMA administrator, said the permit of Rising Sun to quarry at Sitio Nagyantok in Barangay Cawag had been cancelled two weeks ago.

"It committed lots of violations. For one, it did not have blasting permits," Arreza said when reached through his mobile phone.

Responding to Lacbain's request filed on Monday and his report that the company continued operations, SBMA ecology center manager Ameth de la Llana said she and her team were scheduled to start on Tuesday an investigation of the health and environmental concerns in Nagyantok. The area is within the territorial jurisdiction of the SBMA.

If reports proved true, she said Rising Sun was bound by its environmental clearance certificate to answer for adverse social and environmental impacts.

During a medical mission there by the Rotary Club, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, and the Zambales War Against Poverty Foundation on April 9, Lacbain said parents reported that workers used explosives to clear the mountain near the village.

"Whenever there was blasting, we had run out of places where to hide our children from the fine dust enveloping our whole village. On those occasions, we were all swathed in red soil," said Jevani Paclipan, a resident, in a report sent by Lacbain. Her children, 7-year-old Ma. Shaira and 4-year-old Juvan Ray, have asthma.

A health survey in a cluster of families showed 12 children afflicted with asthma, reports by doctors who joined the mission showed.

Surveys were ongoing to establish the extent of the impact of the quarry operations on the settlers.

They reported that the quarrying began in October last year, with blasting done every other day and recently, twice a week. The stones and soil are sifted right in the village, then loaded in trucks that are hauled by barges. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ROUNDUP

Physical therapy training

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Barangay health workers in Tampakan, South Cotabato recently underwent training on basic physical therapy (PT) procedures during an orientation and treatment mission conducted by the Dr. Liborio Gomez Foundation of Davao City. The training was held at the Competence Center of Sagittarius Mines, Inc. The BHWs were taught basic knowledge on treating musculoskeletal, neurologic and other physical injuries and ailments through physical therapy, proper management of patients suffering from stroke, fractures, scoliosis burns and osteoporosis. Tampakan health chief Dr. Washington Loreno said the training was important to residents who have no access to medical treatment.

Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Subdivision exec slain

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Two men shot and killed the president of a neighborhood association of a subdivision located a few meters from this camp on Sunday dawn. Police said Lolita Ariola, 52, president of the Sta. Cecilia Neighborhood Association in Ceris II-A, Barangay Canlubang, Calamba City was walking toward the gate of the subdivision at around 5 a.m. when the assailants approached and shot her at least twice on her body. The killers fled on board a still unknown vehicle. Noble said the motive in the killing had yet to be ascertained.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Luggage X-ray machine

LEGAZPI CITY—With the resumption of Air Philippines' operation, in addition to the Manila-Legazpi daily flights of Philippine Airlines, Bicol officials echoed the need to either repair or replace the luggage X-ray machine at the city airport. Gov. Fernando Gonzalez, who was alarmed by complaints of departing passengers about delay in the physical inspection of their baggage, has reiterated a request to the Department of Budget and Management for P1.2 million to solve the problem.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Computer fee questioned

LEGAZPI CITY—Some 100 students of the Banquerohan National High School (BNHS) Oro Site Extension campus here were surprised by the P500 being collected by the school as computer fee when they sought officials to sign their clearances. The students claimed they were allowed to use the computers only once or twice during the school year. This was confirmed by the school's finance officer, Jeff Buiza, who claimed that he had remitted to the principal, Norma Orosco, whatever amount he collected. Higher school authorities could not explain the collection and where the money went.

Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Another NPA camp falls

LUCENA CITY—Army soldiers discovered another New People's Army (NPA) camp in the Sierra Madre mountain ranges on April 7. Southern Luzon Command chief Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay Jr. said two squads from the Army's 16th Infantry Battalion raided the rebel camp on the mountain slope in Sitio Anibongan, Barangay Magsikap in General Nakar town. The soldiers recovered an M-16 rifle with a full magazine; one .38 cal. revolver; one rifle grenade; two GP 2000 Motorola radios with two headsets; two extra chargers and a battery pack; one sack of antigovernment documents; medical kit and assorted documents; 50 computer CDs, and an NPA flag.

Delfin Mallari Jr. PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

TEST OF STRENGTH
Members of the Ifugao tribe take part in a contest that is based on a ritual. The game is known as *Alin Si Kaew*, a Kankaney word that means rolling logs when men of the Igorot tribe find firewood in the mountains to be used in cooking sacrificial animals.

₱8M in cars stolen in Korea seized in Cebu

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THE BUREAU OF Customs has impounded P8 million worth of used and stolen luxury cars that were smuggled into Cebu from South Korea on April 13.

The 10 luxury cars, with an estimated value of P800,000 each, were loaded in five container vans.

Maria Lourdes Mangaoang, customs district collector, said the nine Sorento Limited vehicles and a Starex Hyundai van would be immediately returned to Korea upon the arrival of Korean customs representatives in Cebu anytime this week.

Mangaoang said a big-time syndicate operating in Cebu had been busted with the seizure of the smuggled vehicles.

She said Cebu-based businessmen, who wanted her out of the port, could be involved in the shipment.

She said the customs bureau was prompted to open the container vans after receiving a letter from Roh Suk-Hwan, director of the International Cooperation Division of the Intelligence and International Affairs Bureau of the Korea Customs Service.

The letter alerted the BOC on the vehicle smuggling.

It was addressed to John Simon, chief of the international affairs of the BOC, requesting the bureau for assistance in its ongoing investigation of a smuggling case in Korea.

The letter said the luxury cars, on board the MV Pearl Island, were stolen in Korea.

Ilonggo stunt man sweeps streets for 16 hours

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

WORLD RECORD!

ALIMODIAN, ILOILO—Stunt man Jess Caigoy finally decided to quit past midnight yesterday but not after setting what he hoped would be a world record for continuous street sweeping.

Sunburnt, severely exhausted and dehydrated, Caigoy decided to park his improvised broomstick at 12:32 a.m., exactly 16 hours and 37 minutes after he started his feat and after covering 22 km.

"I had difficulty hearing and my steps were getting smaller and smaller," Caigoy yesterday told the INQUIRER at his air-conditioned room at the Aleosan District Hospital where he rested.

Short of his target of sweeping nonstop for 24 hours, Caigoy said he at first felt frustrated at being forced to quit at Barangay Igtambo in San Miguel town, a kilometer from the poblacion.

"I cried but I later realized I was not breaking a record but setting one," he said.

He said the scorching heat that raised the temperature to 42.7 degrees Celsius past noon on Monday wore him down.

With his latest feat, the 45-year-old Caigoy, who has been dubbed the "Master of Pain" for performing extreme stunts, hopes to earn a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.

He said they would send video documentation and other pieces of proof to the world record body to back up his claim.

Caigoy also performed the feat to help raise funds for the government-run Aleosan District Hospital.

Dr. Ernesto Gavilles, hospital chief, said the money raised from donations during Caigoy's stunt would help the 50-bed hospital acquire equipment, such as operating room tables and machines.

"It would be a big help to us because more than half of our annual P21 million budget goes to salaries ...," Gavilles told the INQUIRER.

The hospital can only allot P10 per meal for every patient because its budget has not changed since 2003, said Gavilles.

Caigoy began sweeping the streets at 7:25 a.m. Monday at his native Leon town, 28 km southwest of Iloilo City. He only took two 15-minute breaks during the more than 16 hours he swept the streets using broomsticks made of buri palm and with a PVC pipe handle.

From Leon, he continued sweeping to the neighboring Alimodian town and was on his third and last eight-hour leg in San Miguel when exhaustion set in.

Although short of his target, Caigoy won the hearts of residents who lined up the streets until the evening.

The residents who were curious and eager to see him clean the streets shook his hand and gave donations.

"It was overwhelming," said Caigoy.

Leon Councilor Roberto Calaor III, the event organizer, said the total amount of donations and pledges was still being determined.

Organizers are hoping to net P100,000 from sponsorship and donations. Under an agreement, 70 percent of the proceeds, or P70,000, will be donated to the hospital.

The rest of the amount will go to Caigoy to defray training expenses and organizing costs.

Caigoy, who spent 27 years in Manila as an office clerk and later as a stunt man, returned to his hometown with his family because he said "life was getting difficult" in the capital.

He became fascinated with extreme stunts in 1994 and eventually became hooked to performing incredible feats of physical endurance like breaking wine bottles in his head, licking electric fan blades while they rotated at full speed, and pulling a car with a rope attached to knives embedded in his stomach.

His long list of stunts have landed him in "Ripley's Believe It or Not," Incredible Features, AXN Action channel and in local variety shows.

In 2003, he tried to set a Guinness record by pedaling on a "stepper," an exercise machine that simulates climbing stairs, to set a record for the most steps done in 12 hours. But the feat was not recognized by Guinness because it wanted a different stunt.

"It's not just a hobby. I don't care if I bleed because I feel a sense of fulfillment when I perform the feats," said Caigoy.

DA warns of red tide in Ilocos mussels, oysters

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—THE Department of Agriculture in the Ilocos region has advised against gathering and eating *tahong* (mussels), *talaba* (oysters) and other shellfish from Anda and Bolinao towns as these were found positive for red tide poisoning.

DA Regional Director Nestor Domenden, in a letter to Gov. Victor Agbayani, said the results of the analysis of fresh shell meat samples showed that these were contaminated with poisons from red tide organisms.

Agbayani enjoined the mayors of the two towns to inform the public to "refrain from harvesting, gathering, transporting, marketing and eating shellfish from their areas until further notice."

Domenden said, however, that fish harvested from the same areas are safe for human consumption, provided these are fresh and washed thoroughly and their internal organs, such as gills and intestines, are removed.

Records from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources showed that mussels gathered in Luciente and Luna villages in Bolinao and Siapar in Anda were positive for red tide poison.

"The local governments of Anda and Bolinao are monitoring the affected areas," Domenden said. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Head of mine spill probe team comes out in open against mining

By Bobby Labalan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

SORSOGON CITY—THE COMMISSION created by Malacañang to conduct an independent investigation of the operation of Australian firm Lafayette Philippines Inc. (LPI) voiced strong opposition to allowing the company to resume operations.

Bishop Arturo Bastes, chair of the nine-man commission, said the probe body would raise a howl if LPI was allowed to resume operations while the investigation was still ongoing.

Bastes, a staunch mining critic, said the commission had asked Malacañang to extend for another month a one-month timetable it gave the commission to finish the job.

Lawyer Julito Sarmiento, LPI director and corporate secretary, said he respected the bishop's stand but he explained that what the mining firm was asking was to be allowed to conduct a test run of its operations to see whether the safeguards it put in place to prevent future spills were working.

"These test runs should be a welcome move for the commission since the body is supposed to be for fact-finding. Like a car being tested for emissions, you won't know if it's compliant unless you test-drive it," the official added.

Bastes said the commission had found "so many irregularities from the very beginning and so much irresponsibility from government regulators from the very start."

The bishop, however, refused to elaborate on the commission's findings.

Gov. Raul Lee has expressed doubts about the commission's impartiality as Bastes and some of his members are known to be mining critics.

Lee challenged the commission to also conduct its own water, fish and sediment analysis, similar to what the provincial and city governments of Sorsogon had done.

Lee said the investigation must be based on scientific facts and not on mere speculations for results to be credible.

An independent study by the University of the Philippines' Natural Sciences Research Institute has confirmed previous findings made by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources that the mercury level in the coastal areas of Sorsogon was within tolerable level.

A fish scare that gripped the fishing towns of Sorsogon and deprived its communities of livelihood is turning out to be based on a false report that mercury was contaminating fish and other marine creatures.

The National Bureau of Investigation has already started looking into the source of the report as several officials and groups of fishermen demanded that those who started it be brought to justice and punished.

Chop-chop murders in Saudi

From page A1

The suspects were rounded up on April 11, seven days after body parts were found and the disappearance of the six Filipinos was reported.

In a phone interview last night, a DFA official quoting a report from the consulate in Jeddah said authorities had so far pieced together some of the body parts but that the corpse "did not look like a Filipino."

There was also "a hand" that did not match the other parts and which apparently belonged to another person, the official said.

It was not immediately known whether the body parts belonged to those who were reported missing.

The Philippine consulate in Jeddah has made representations with Brig. Gen. Mohamad Al-Zainan of the Central Police Directorate.

As of yesterday, the DFA said, the mission was still awaiting a report it requested from the police concerning the condition of the Filipinos as well as the specific charges they could be facing.

Consul General Pendosina Lomondot had not been allowed to view the recovered body parts either, the department said.

18 Filipino miners

On Monday, the DFA reported that another group of Filipinos had been detained in Jeddah since last week, this time on allegations that they stole unprocessed gold from the mining company that employed them.

Eighteen Filipino miners working for the Saudi Arabian Mining Co. aroused suspicion when melted pieces of gold, bags of rocks and soil, and melting paraphernalia were found in their quarters during an inspection.

Spain lauds GMA for commuting death sentences

From page A1

statement, quoting the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

The statement was coursed through Philippine Ambassador to Madrid Joseph Bernardo.

"The situation of Mr. Larrañaga has been the object of maximum attention on the part of the different institutions of the Spanish state that has been all the time interested in his fate before the Philippine authorities," it said.

It cited the messages of concern issued by the Spanish king and then President Jose Ma. Aznar, as well as "the interest of the Parliament, and the personal representations of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Minister of Defense, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs."

"The Spanish government wishes to express its most sincere gratitude to the government of the Philippines, in particular to its President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," it added.

Abducted

The Chiong sisters were abducted on the evening of July 16, 1997, while waiting for their father to pick them up at the Ayala Center Cebu.

The body of Marijoy, 20, was found two days later in a secluded ravine in the nearby town of Carcar.

Jacqueline, 23, has never been found.

Larrañaga's death sentence had drawn appeals for clemency from visiting Spanish delegations, among them lawmakers and diplomats, as well as other European groups opposed to the death penalty.

The lobbying apparently paid off early on. Last November, the Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that Ms Arroyo had assured then visiting Spanish Defense Minister Jose Bono that Larrañaga's death sentence would not be carried out "while she is President."

THE CHIONG SISTERS, Marijoy (left) and elder sister Jacqueline, whose body has not been found to this day, were abducted while waiting for their father to pick them up at Ayala Center Cebu.

CEBU DAILY NEWS

The convict himself had consistently proclaimed his innocence, saying he was in Quezon City attending a cooking class on the day of the crime.

2 life terms

Larrañaga, Josman Aznar, Rowen Adlawan, Alberto Cano, Ariel Balansag and brothers James Andrew and James Anthony Uy drew two life sentences each in May 1999 for the rape-murder of the Chiong sisters.

In a bizarre twist in the case, Judge Martin Ocampo, who had tried and convicted the seven youths, was found dead in a hotel room in Cebu in October 1999.

Authorities later ruled his death a suicide and said that no foul play was involved.

In February 2004, the Supreme Court upgraded the punishment of Larrañaga et al., except for one of the group, to death by lethal injection.

The life sentence on James Anthony Uy, who was a minor at the time of the crime, was retained.

In July last year, the Supreme Court en banc denied the motions for reconsideration filed by Larrañaga and four other convicts.

Entry of judgment

But according to New Bilibid Prisons Director Vicente Vinarao, only after the Supreme Court had made an "entry of judgment" on his sentence would Larrañaga join the 81 death row inmates whose penalties had been "affirmed with finality," and who would be automatically covered by the President's commutation.

Based on NBP records obtained by the INQUIRER, at least 198 death row inmates are waiting for their sentences to be "affirmed with finality."

Larrañaga is included in this number, Vinarao said.

"Once entry of judgment is made by the Supreme Court and the order is handed down to us, that's the time the Office of the President will issue another order for commutation," he said.

But Vinarao expressed certainty that Larrañaga would benefit from the commutation, saying that his sentence had been affirmed and that he was "only waiting for the papers" from the high court.

Vinarao said the 81 convicts ready for commutation—among them four women—had been assigned to a separate cell in Building 1.

"When the President hands down the commutation order, they will be ready to undergo the one-month physical and neuro-psychiatric orientation," he said.

Inmates' wish

An inmate, who requested anonymity for security purposes, said he and other death convicts with appeals pending in court were wishing that all 1,110 prisoners in Building 1 would be covered by the commutation.

"We are praying and hoping that the reprieve will not be discriminating. We pray that even those whose sentences are under review will be included," he said.

The inmate said most of the convicts on death row were farmers and vendors from poor families who were convicted of kidnapping for ransom, murder and violation of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Others were convicted of car theft with murder, highway robbery and parricide, he said.

"We and our families are really thankful to the President. Our relatives working abroad have sent e-mail messages to the Office of the President expressing our gratitude," the inmate said.

'Moral high ground'

"We also pray that the victims of the crimes we committed would have space in their hearts for forgiveness," he said.

A DFA official, who declined to be named because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said the Spanish message praising Ms Arroyo for her move was a welcome development for Philippine foreign service officers lobbying to save Filipinos working overseas from death sentences.

He said the President's move put the Philippine government on a "moral high ground" in asking other states to spare the lives of condemned Filipinos for humanitarian reasons.

Gonzalez: I almost exonerated them

From page A1

utes," Gonzalez said. "There is no evidence of conspiracy."

Gonzalez's move, in effect, modified the resolution of the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office holding the four US Marines criminally liable for conspiracy to commit rape.

Gonzalez said he would order the Department of Justice panel tasked to prosecute the Subic rape case to file a motion revising its charge sheet.

He said Smith remained as the principal accused not only because of the strong evidence against him, but also because Smith did not file a counter-affidavit to refute the charges against him. "He did not controvert the allegation against him by the victim," Gonzalez said.

The accused Marines have insisted that only one of them had sex with the woman, whose identity has been withheld upon her request, and that it was consensual.

The men are in the custody of the US Embassy. It has refused to hand them over to Philippine authorities, citing the Visiting Forces Agreement that gives American officials custody of US servicemen accused of crimes until the completion of their trial.

'Legally incorrect'

Evalyn Ursua, one of the private lawyers of the complainant, said Gonzalez's decision was "legally incorrect," pointing out that a suspect becomes an accessory for something done after or subsequent to the crime.

Ursua explained there are three conditions for a downgrade: When the suspect "profited" from the crime, when he concealed the effects or instruments of the crime to prevent its discovery, or helped in the escape of the principal accused.

What the three Marines did along with Smith in the van did not fall under these three conditions, Ursua told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"They were all there before, during and after the crime," she said. "They were cheering Smith on. They were all rowdy and inducing him to do it."

"So for me, it escapes my imagination how Secretary Gonzalez rationalized that decision," she said.

Victim disappointed

Ursua said the victim expressed "disappointment and frustration over what's happening" when told of yesterday's development.

She said that it further irked her that Gonzalez seemed to be "conditioning the mind of the public" in the days leading to yesterday's ruling, citing previous media reports quoting the DOJ's intention to downgrade the charges against the suspects.

Brickbats expected

Gonzalez said he anticipated brickbats from the victim's side and other women and cause-oriented groups.

"This is what I find in the evidence [of the case]. If they are not satisfied [with it], it does not bother me," he said.

The alleged rape had triggered anti-American protests by leftist groups at the US Embassy, using the incident as an issue to question Philippine ties with the United States.

On Monday, Gonzalez ordered a new preliminary investigation to look into the criminal liability of Timoteo Soriano, who was the driver of the Starex van the Marines rode in.

Soriano could be charged as an accomplice—penalized with 12 to 20 years' imprisonment.

"He was the driver and he must have known (what was taking place). He could have reported it to the police authorities," Gonzalez said.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

SSS DATA CAPTURE WORKSTATIONS

Supply, delivery and installation into operational state 294 units Data Capture Workstation

1. The SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM (SSS) intends to apply the sum of **P115,583,676.00** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the proposed Data Capture Workstations, consisting of the following:

Item Description	Amount	Source of Fund
Item#1: 294 units Data Capture Workstations	P88,910,520.00	CY2006 Approved Budget for SSS ID Card Project
Item#2: 3-year Maintenance Service after the required 2-year warranty period	P26,673,156.00	Budget for Operating Expenditures - Maintenance & Repair of Computer Equipment

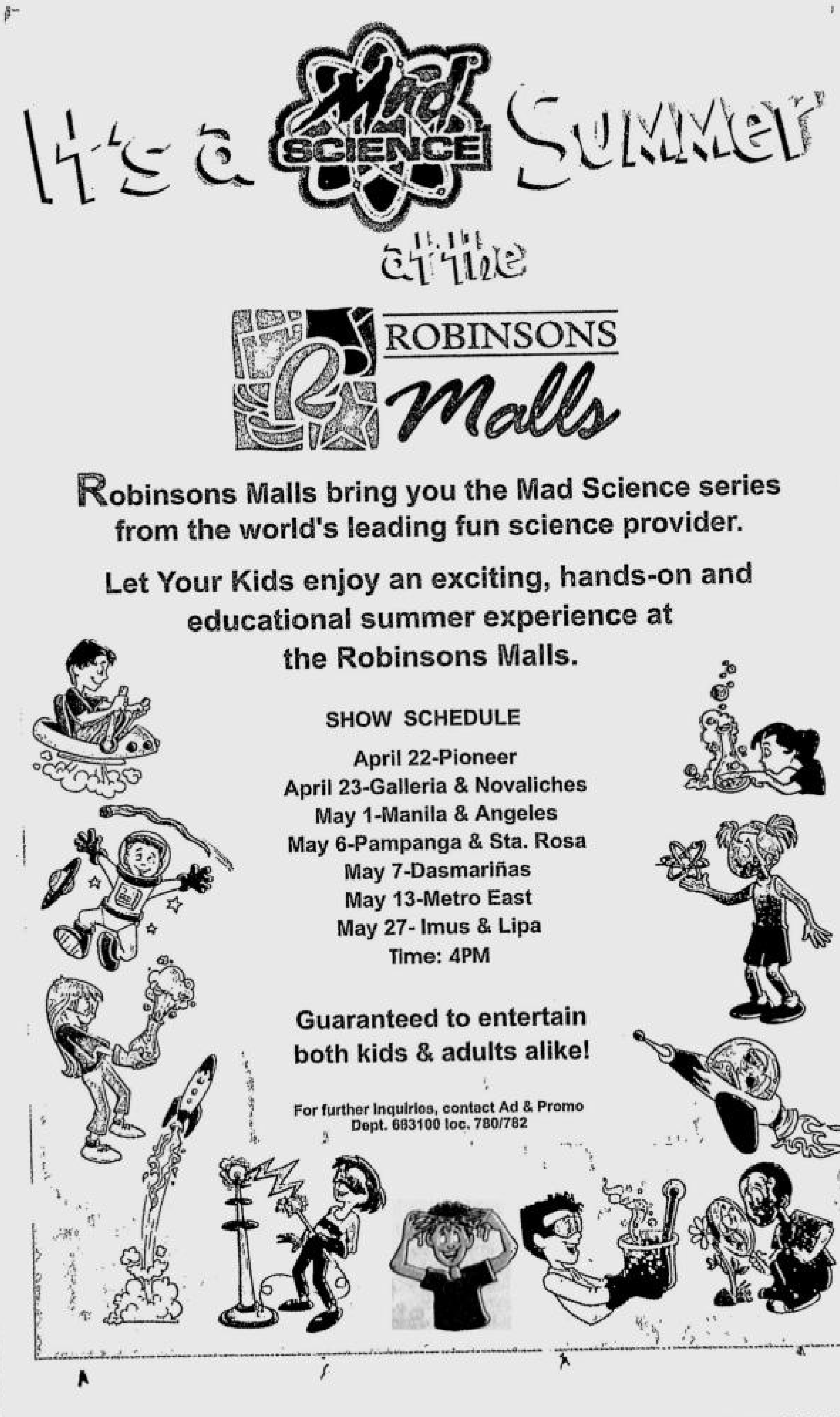
Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

2. The SSS now invites Bids from eligible bidders for the supply, delivery and set-up into operational state 294 units Data Capture Workstations. Delivery and installation of the GOODS are required within **sixty (60) calendar days** after contract signing/receipt of Purchase Order (PO). The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Instruction to Bidders (ITB).
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section I of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ***SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM*** and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from Monday to Friday. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a **nonrefundable fee of P100,000.00.** The method of payment will be on a cash basis payable at the SSS Cashiering Department, SSS Main Bldg., Ground floor, upon accomplishment of SSS Form R-6. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The SSS will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **April 24, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.,** Green Room. 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg.. East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered at the Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Building on **May 19, 2006 not later than 3:00 p.m.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and amount indicated in the Bid Tender Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be held on **May 19, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.,** Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the given address.
9. The ***SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM*** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Bid and Awards Committee
The Secretariat
6th Floor. SSS Main Building
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel # 922-2991; 924-7380; 920-6401 local 5491
Email - bac@sss.gov.ph
Facsimile number – (02) 924-7380

(Sgd.) THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI - April 19, 2006)



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GMA willing to stake 'position' amid protests

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DESPITE PROTESTS FROM crime victims and the legal questions raised, President Macapagal-Arroyo is willing to stake her "position" on her commutation of all death sentences to life terms.

"As in many instances in the past, she is placing her position on the line even while acknowledging the negative reactions and strong arguments against it," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said yesterday in the course of disputing the statement of a legal expert that Ms Arroyo had encroached on the territory of Congress and the Supreme Court.

"The President's latest action affirms her deeply held personal Christian values and does not violate the constitutional separation of powers," Bunye said.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President herself was open to changing her mind on the new policy if the crime rate zoomed higher.

He also reiterated that only those cases that had reached final judgment in the Supreme Court would be covered by it.

In a radio interview, Ermita said Ms Arroyo's decision "depended on the situation at that time," suggesting that she could change her mind on the matter.

"If the President sees that the crime rate, especially of heinous crimes, is rising, she will not hesitate to change her policy," he said.

For the moment, however, Ms Arroyo "believes that it is just right [to commute death sentences] for compassionate reasons, especially for those in prison who are old and sick," he said.

'Unequivocal'

But while Ermita hinted of the possibility of Ms Arroyo changing her position, Bunye told reporters: "The important thing is the President has made her decision. It's unequivocal, and it's based on law and on Christian values."

Bunye said Ms Arroyo was viewing the matter "not as a political battle but as a basic moral issue affecting prolife values, in the belief that forgiveness and compassion will serve the best interest of the nation and society."

"The President's moral compass clearly indicates that no executions will take place under her term. And she is prepared to certify legislation to abolish the death penalty so that this issue can be fully discussed and debated upon in the legislature," he said.

He stressed that the country could expect no executions of death convicts for the rest of Ms Arroyo's term, and harped on her readiness to certify as urgent bills seeking to abolish the death penalty.

Only 100

Ermita reiterated the Department of Justice's clarification that only about 100 death row convicts would have their sentences commuted because the cases of the others had not yet been declared final and executory by the Supreme Court.

"There are more than 1,000 on death row but it does not mean that they will be given commutations because their cases are still being reviewed," he said.

Andres Bautista, dean of the Far Eastern University Institute of Law, had previously pointed out that the President could only commute the death sentences of those whose cases had reached final judgment in the high court.

The President had announced in her Easter message that she was commuting all death sentences to life imprisonment.

Ermita also downplayed the warnings of revenge raised by families of the victims of heinous crimes.

"This is only the immediate reaction of the relatives. We are not blaming them for what they are thinking, but I'm sure their minds will be cleared soon. First, the death row convicts will still be in jail. Second, they will stay in jail for 20 to 30 years," he said.

Haven for traffickers

Former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, the principal author of the Death Penalty Law (Republic Act No. 7659), warned that the repeal of the law would make the country a "comfortable haven for drug traffickers."

Herrera, who authored the law primarily to make drug trafficking a heinous crime punishable by death, recommended that Congress amend the law but keep the death penalty for drug traffickers and rapists of minors.

He questioned the propriety of the President's decision to commute all death sentences to life imprisonment, saying she should not use the death penalty issue as a means to court the support of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on Charter change.

"What is foremost in her mind over anything else is how she can stay in power. *Sobra pa sa kapit sa patalim* (She'd grip the knife's edge)," he said.

Herrera agreed that there might be some cases under RA 7659 that could be excluded, such as crimes against property that resulted in a killing because the victim had fought back.

He recalled that the bill was originally intended for drug traffickers but that his colleagues in the Senate inserted other offenses, even car theft and smuggling.

But these two offenses were not included when the bill was finally approved in 1993.

Herrera said that while it was up to Congress to repeal the law, he believed that without the death penalty as a deterrent, the Philippines would become a drug shipment point.

As it was, he said, the Philippines was already considered an illegal drug manufacturing center.

Right, wrong

In Dagupan City, Archbishop Oscar Cruz described the President's decision as both "right" and "wrong."

"It is right because the state is never the source of life of any citizen and therefore it has no right to take the life of any citizen," Cruz told reporters.

"Nevertheless, it is true that the state has the right to regulate how life is led, especially in reference to rights and compliance with obligations," he said.

The archbishop, a staunch critic of Ms Arroyo, also said her decision was right because "a life sentence is not really that much less than a death sentence."

"A death sentence means you suffer only for a couple of minutes while a life sentence means you are behind bars during your entire life, which is painful," he said.

Cruz said his heart went out to the relatives of victims of crimes like rape and murder.

"But when we forgive people who offended us, it does not mean that the [offenders] are already forgiven by God," he said.

According to Cruz, commuting death sentences is wrong "if it is used as transactional politics, or if the President is commuting death to life so that the bishops will keep quiet."

The CBCP had raised two questions: The legitimacy of Ms Arroyo's presidency and the flawed Charter change process.

"The commutation does not answer these two questions," Cruz said.

Unimpressed

He added: "If the President is really prolife, why is it that as time passes, there are more killings of [members of] cause-oriented groups, and these are not solved?"

The human rights group Karapatan is not impressed with the President's move.

Karapatan, along with the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace, issued the reminder that since 2001, when Ms Arroyo rose to power, 556 persons had been killed extrajudicially, which she had yet to condemn.

There are also 199 victims who survived attacks that Karapatan said it had reason to believe should be blamed on the supposed death squads of the Philippine military.

In the first quarter of 2006 alone, Karapatan said, there were 53 killings of members of such groups as Bayan Muna and its allied organizations in the legal leftist movement.

"The government has not only failed to resolve the killings and bring the perpetrators to the bar of justice, it has also abetted the rise in extrajudicial killings and involuntary disappearances, among other human rights violations, with its counter-insurgency program," said Karapatan secretary general Marie Hilao-Enriquez.

With reports from Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau; Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Rep. Asistio: I was a death row convict

From page A1

tence of hit men inside the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City who would liquidate fellow convicts for a fee.

He recalled one instance when a rich Taiwanese businessman paid the jail warden and a fellow death convict to put down Benjamin Ong, who had killed the businessman's son.

"But I succeeded in scuttling their plans twice since Ong is my friend," Asistio said.

He said the Taiwanese tried to have Ong eliminated three times and bribed Asistio with P1 million, but to no avail, according to the ex-convict.

Ong was eventually pardoned and left for the United States to start a new life.

He is now a "happy California-based citizen," Asistio said.

Big Four Gang

Asistio was part of the '60s notorious "Big Four Gang," a group of young men from Caloocan and Malabon said to be the most feared on the nightclub strip on Roxas Boulevard, which was then called Dewey Boulevard.

According to Supreme Court records, Asistio and Benigno Urquico were among the accused in the December 1962 kidnap-for-ransom of Chua Pao.

Urquico was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964. In December 1965, strongman Ferdinand Marcos commuted his sentence to 17 to 20 years. On Dec. 16, 1999, then President Joseph Estrada granted Urquico a full pardon.

Asistio, meanwhile, spent 13 years at the NBP before his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Eventually, he was pardoned by Marcos.

Asistio, a member of the House minority, believes that life imprisonment is a heavier penalty than death. "If you will be executed (by electric chair, at that time), that solves all your problems," he said in Filipino.

He recalled that convicts serving life terms would rather face execution than spend their entire lives in misery at the NBP.

He cited the case of former Nueva Ecija Rep. Nicanor de Guzman who was also pardoned by Malacañang.

"*Ako dating* convict, *naging* congressman; *siya* (De Guzman) *naman dating* congressman *na naging* convict (I was an ex-convict who became a congressman; he was a former congressman who became a convict)," quipped Asistio.

In supporting the commutation of all death sentences, Asistio said: "It's not the gravity of the punishment, it's the certainty that when you commit a crime you will be arrested."

Hiring hit men

Taking a cue from Asistio's fate, other House members appealed to all crime victims and their relatives to be reasonable. They should not take the law into their hands by hiring hit men to kill erstwhile death convicts.

Representatives Marcelino Libanan and Douglas Cagas said the courts had already rendered justice to crime victims and their relatives. Even if President Macapagal-Arroyo commuted the sentences of death row convicts, this did not alter the guilty verdict of the courts.

Libanan said the plan by heinous crime survivors and their families to hire hit men inside the NBP for revenge "defies reason, values and faith."

"We appeal to them to remain calm and continue to abide by and respect the law. The President's decision does not change the courts' guilty judgment rendered on these convicts and the prescription for capital punishment for the crimes they committed," Libanan said, adding that making an issue of the separation of powers lacked merit.

Only during GMA's term?

"It was an exercise of presidential prerogative. The commutation does not mean the courts cannot impose the death penalty. It only imposed a moratorium on executions now during the President's term," he said.

Cagas said the threats of revenge from crime victims should be taken seriously by the NBP.

"The NBP has to double their security measures. Prevention is always the best security policy," he said.

Although he sympathized with the crime victims and their families, Cagas said "it's best for them to follow the law and keep their faith in the country's justice system."

No pardon, no parole ...

From page A1

royo about capital punishment during the latter's visits to Cebu last year. She said Ms Arroyo repeatedly expressed a position against it.

According to Thelma, she could accept albeit with a heavy heart the fact that the death sentences of Paco Larrañaga et al. would be commuted.

But she said she would not take sitting down the possibility that all death convicts, including "the killers of my two daughters," would be pardoned or paroled.

"I can agree to life in prison provided there is no way they can get out of jail; no pardon, no parole," she said.

Pressure from EU

Thelma said she believed that the President's decision was also shaped by pressure from the European Union, which is campaigning against the Death Penalty Law.

She lamented that the President did not conduct consultations on the matter before announcing the commutation of all death sentences.

Thelma said that even if Congress decided to abolish the death penalty, she and the CAV would continue to lobby for it.

She said her group wanted capital punishment for persons who had committed heinous crimes like rape and murder.

Those who raped and killed her daughters deserved the death penalty, she said.

Audience with GMA

Larrañaga's family welcomed the news about the President's decision.

But his mother, Margarita Larrañaga, said the family still wanted the President to grant him an absolute pardon or executive clemency.

She said their next move would be to try to have an audience with Ms Arroyo.

Margarita Larrañaga said the family sent a letter to Ms Arroyo in February, through the Office of the Presidential Assistance for Central Visayas, asking her to make time to listen to the statements of witnesses attesting to her son's innocence.

"The President has the prerogative to grant executive clemency or absolute pardon. We are hoping that perhaps she might listen to the witnesses that the court did not listen to... But there's no feedback [from the Palace] yet," the mother said.

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ENGR. EDWIN P. PASCUA
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(Sgd.) ROMILLAS C. PASCUAL
General Manager

(PDI–April 19, 2006)

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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 05
(series of 2006)

TO: ALL CONCERNED
SUBJECT : GUIDELINES ON THE RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF FILIPINO WORKES TO PALAU

In line with the Administration's thrust to ensure the welfare of Filipino workers bound for Palau the following documents shall be submitted to POEA for evaluation/approval of accreditation:

1. Special Power of Attorney duly authenticated by the Philippine Embassy in Palau
2. Authenticated manpower request indicating the position and salary of the workers to be hired.
3. Authenticated master employment contract of the principal/employer
4. Valid business license/commercial registration of the principal/employer
5. Visa or equivalent documents

In case the principal/employer is a foreign placement agency, a list of the direct employers, their addresses and workers needed shall be submitted.

For additional job orders, the Philippine recruitment agency shall submit the authenticated manpower request from the foreign principal/employer.

For strict compliance.

(Sgd.) ROSALINDA DIMAPILIS BALDOZ
Administrator

(PDI–April 19, 2006)

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
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E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • Website: www. peza.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1 The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), through its Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2005 intends to apply the sum of PhP 3,470,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the PEZA Network Equipment and Structured Cabling for Head Office, BEZ and CEZ. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

2 The PEZA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the PEZA Network Requirements: a) Structured Cabling of Head Office, Cavite Economic Zone and Bataan Economic Zone, b) Upgrade of Existing Head Office Router, c) 3 Units Remote Router with Complete Accessories, d) 10 Units Edge Switches with Complete Accessories, and e) 15 Units UPS (500VA). The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3 Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC and at least five (5) years in the Structured Cabling and IT Equipment Industry and is able to supply, install and configure the proposed Structured Cabling and IT equipments. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

4. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below.

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders from 19 April to 05 May 2006, Mondays to Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of P2,000.00 and submission of a certified copy of their G-EPS Certificate of Registration. The method of payment will be cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

6. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 12 May 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.

7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. of 25 May 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than 1% of the ABC. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

8. Bid opening shall be on 25 May 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor Social Hall, PEZA Bldg., Roxas Blvd. corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

9 In case of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.

10 The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

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THE CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – April 19 & 26, 2006)

Opposition, gov't brace for May 1 protests

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION IS BRACING for another government crackdown on May 1 as party-list representatives warned that the administration might use the traditional Labor Day protests to crush its critics.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Risa Hontiveros said Malacañang would use the protests to again declare a state of emergency "to finish its crackdown against the opposition."

Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano said the administration was trying to "condition" the public to a "violent dispersal of Labor Day protests."

He noted the signs that the administration was about to launch another crackdown: the police was already preparing measures against street protests and administration lawmakers were hyping reports that President Macapagal-Arroyo's enemies were again recruiting soldiers for a new coup plot on Labor Day.

Hontiveros accused the Palace of creating an "imaginative scenario to link legitimate expressions of dissent to an alleged coup plot against the government."

"This is clearly a warning to anti-GMA forces to abandon their plans to launch their traditional street protests on May 1," she said in a statement.

The claim that a new coup plot was being hatched to coincide with the Labor Day protests "[foreshadowed] a malicious intent to declare a state of emergency again," she said.

Hontiveros also warned that a new crackdown would not spare opposition lawmakers since Congress was not in session.

"Sessions will resume on May 15, 2006, so come Labor Day, if the government feels bold enough, expect to see more opposition leaders in Congress arrested," Hontiveros said.

Following a foiled coup plot, the President declared a state of national emergency last Feb. 24 on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the 1986 People Power Revolution. The police violently dispersed opposition rallies because of the attempted coup.

The government then filed rebellion charges against Mariano and five other party-list legislators for alleged involvement in the plot.

Yesterday Mariano said "the climate of fear the Arroyo government intends to create" in the run-up to May 1 would not threaten the Filipino working class.

"On May 1, rain or shine, tens of thousands of workers, farmers, women, youth and other poor sectors of society will resolutely show Ms Arroyo a sea of red flags," he said.

Hontiveros said she was undaunted by the threat of a crackdown.

Director Vidal Querol, the chief of the Metro Manila Police, yesterday said the police was ready for the Labor Day protests. He said that based on intelligence information that the police have, the country has got "nothing to worry [about]."

He said protesters should apply for a rally permit early so it would be clear to authorities where they intended to hold their rallies and not run afoul of the law against illegal assembly.

"That's when we don't get to understand each other," Querol said.

He identified Plaza Miranda and Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila as the two places where militants would be allowed to converge on May 1.

With a report from Luige del Puerto

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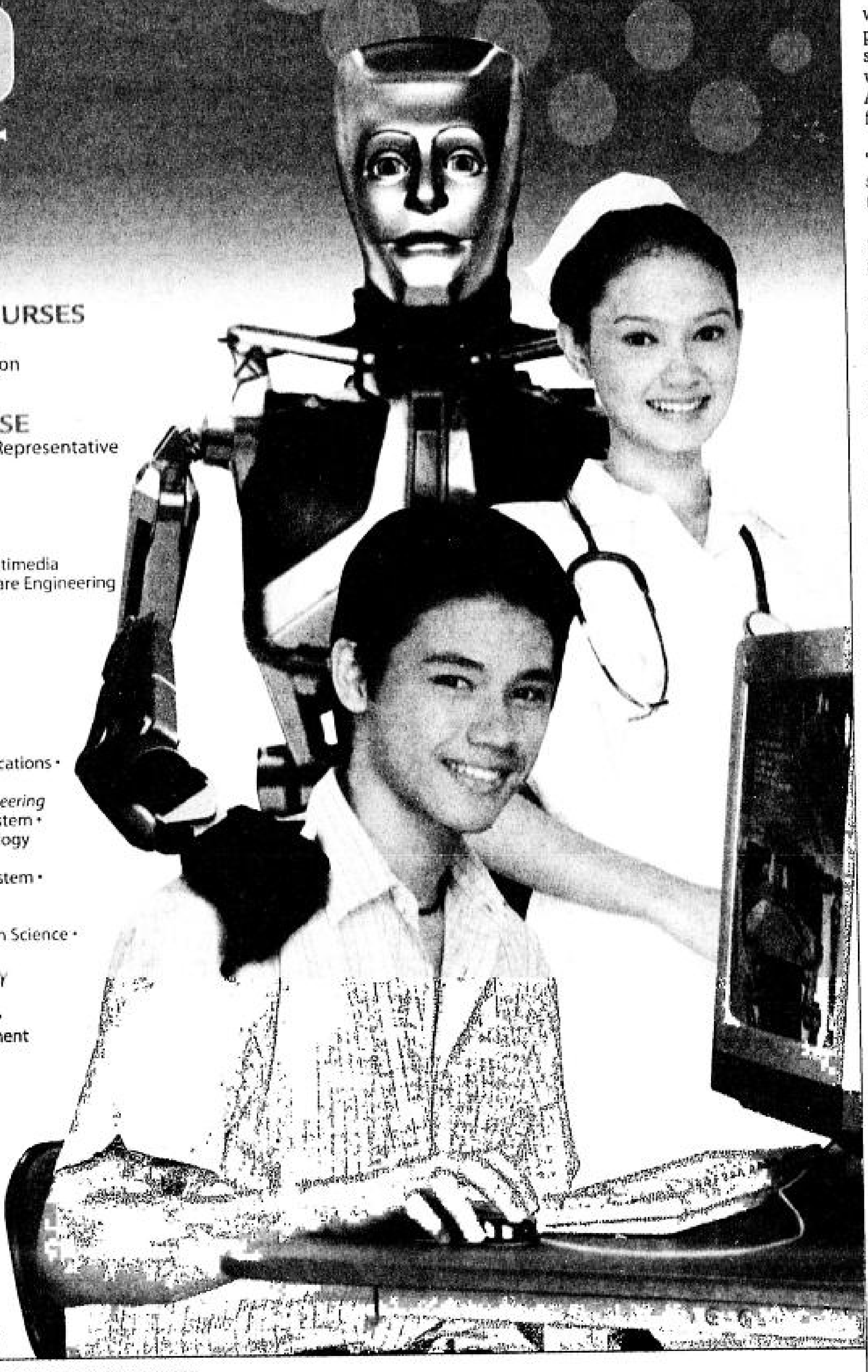

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CHOWKING LAUNCHES 702-8888 DELIVERY

702-8888
702-8888

The country's largest Oriental Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) chain has officially introduced the One-Number-Delivery-Service in Metro Manila with the delivery number 702-8888.

Chowking started its One-Number-Delivery in the latter part of 2005 with 10 stores in the Pasig and Makati areas. And with its successful implementation and its promising potential as a sales growth source, the 702-8888 call system now covers Metro Manila, to as far as San Pedro, Laguna in the South and some parts of Rizal.

Jojo Ajero, Chowking's marketing manager, describes the venture as a "tool for us to reach more customers, serve them our delicious yet affordable meals, and delight them with our fast and efficient service in their homes and offices."

Chowking One-Number-Delivery-Service pointman, Mr. Boyet Geronimo added: "We are very excited with the growth prospects of the One-Number-Delivery-Service. We would like to assure the public that we have long prepared our delivery systems, from the call center, to our store preparation areas, to the delivery of the products to the doorsteps and offices of our customers."

The biggest challenge for the Chowking delivery system was putting up an efficient way of delivering the wide array of products it offers to customers. But as Mr. Ajero explained, "One of the strengths of Chowking as a brand is the many choices on the menu that customers have for all dayparts. And the innovation in product offering never ends as we try to further improve the existing ones while offering new lines as often as possible to create more reasons for the customers to be loyal to us."

"This is just the beginning of a long term plan for the Chowking One-Number-Delivery-Service. More stores are in the pipeline, more areas are to be covered. Our delivery systems are evolving to better serve our customers and further improve our speed of delivery," said Geronimo.

Editor **Ester G. Dipasupil**
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Grim end for Good Samaritan

Vendor shot dead for helping 2 robbery victims in Las Piñas

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A GOOD SAMARITAN ENDED UP dead Monday night when he tried to help two women who had just been robbed in Las Piñas City.

Roberto Padilla, a sidewalk vendor, was shot in the head by one of three alleged holdup men on Real Street, Barangay Talon 2, Senior Insp. Gary Garen, station commander of the Police Community Precinct-4, said.

In his report, Garen said Bernadette Tungol and her sister, Charmaine, had just left their lotto outlet a few minutes past 9 p.m. and were walking toward their car when three men held them up.

The robbers then fled with the bags of the two women which contained P2,600 in cash, a cellular phone worth P25,000, credit cards and ID cards.

When the women shouted for help, Garen said Padilla, who was standing nearby, immediately went after the robbers.

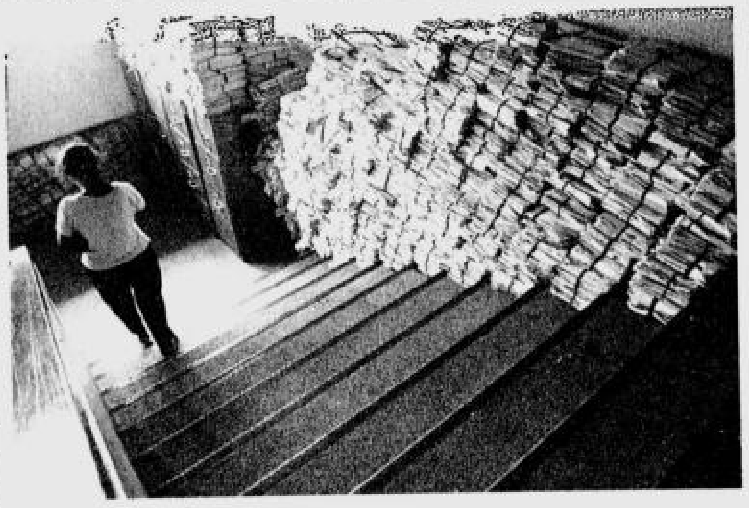
"He started hurling stones at the armed robbers. One of the suspects brandished a firearm and shot Padilla in the head," the police officer said in his report.

When Padilla fell on the pavement, the Tungols said they saw the three men board a red motorcycle which sped off toward Zapote Road.

"Upon learning of the incident, all mobile units were notified for a dragnet operation. However, the suspects managed to escape," Garen said.

As of press time, police were still tracking down the the suspects.

Padilla's body, on the other hand, was brought to the Funeraria Filipinas for an autopsy.



SPACE FILLERS
Case files occupy steps leading to the offices of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.
RAFFY LERMA

Cop in Sta. Rosa slay charged

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A POLICEMAN DETAILED TO THE National Capital Region Police Office has been charged with murder in connection with the death of a public information officer of the Sta. Rosa, Laguna, government.

Charged in the city prosecutor's office in Makati on Monday was PO3 Arnel Baguisi, formerly detailed to the NCRPO Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division's Antiterrorism Task Force. He has been on leave since the Feb. 18 shooting incident which left Jensen Cristobal, 31, dead.

Probers also recommended that Cristobal's girlfriend, Sandra Simondac, be investigated after they found out that they were together a few minutes before the victim was shot dead.

Cristobal was shot in a parking lot along President Sergio Osmeña Highway. Witnesses had told police that the gunman sped off aboard a black Honda Civic (UHD 416) shortly after the incident. Police later found out that the car was registered in Baguisi's name.

Upon further investigation, Baguisi turned out to be Simondac's former boyfriend. This was confirmed by Simondac who said she became Cristobal's girlfriend after she broke off with the policeman.

Investigators had requested a ballistic examination of the slugs recovered at the crime scene for comparison with bullets from Baguisi's registered firearm. The Southern Police District Crime Laboratory, however, said Baguisi's test bullets and cartridges were no longer in their files.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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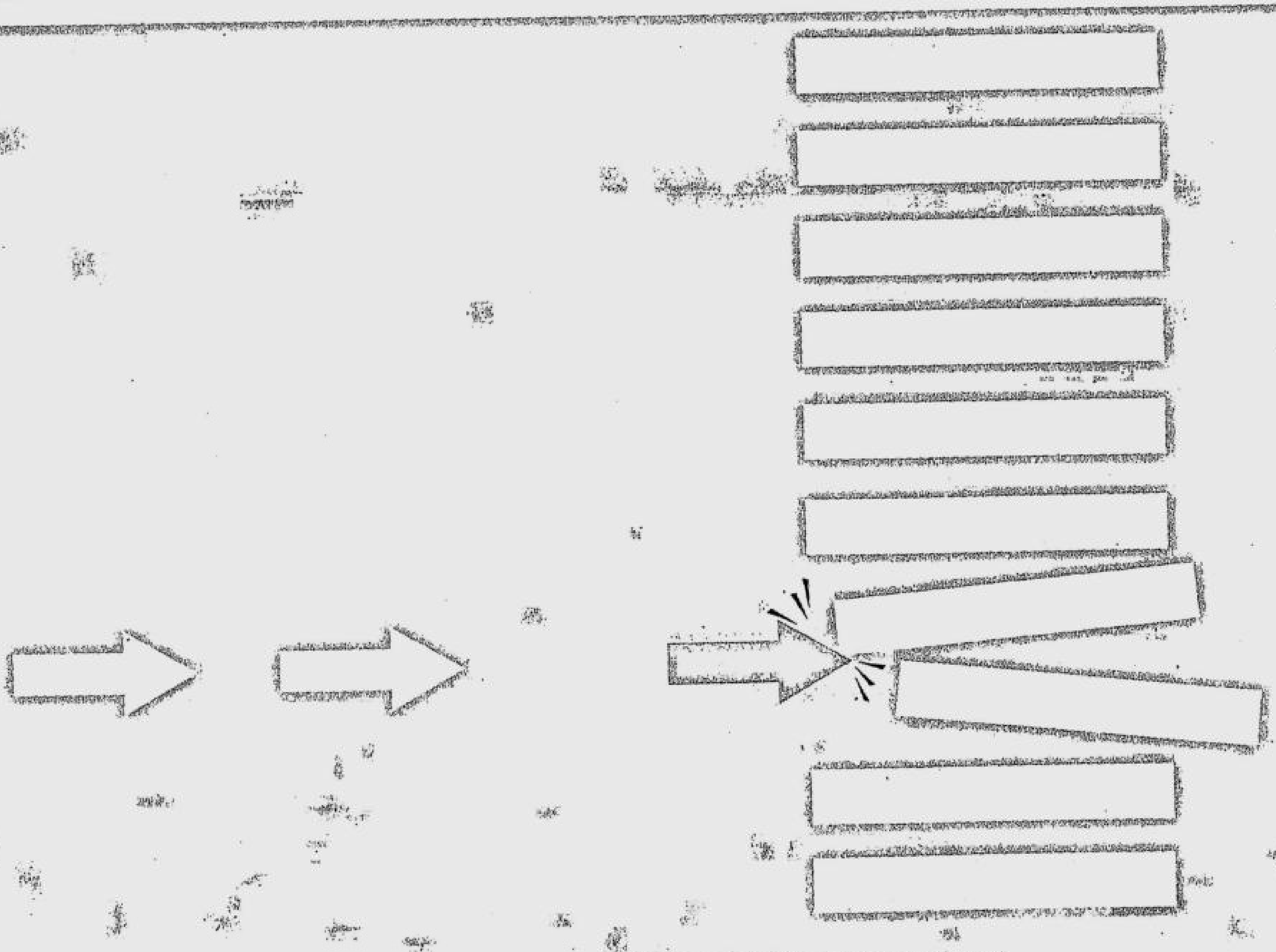

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Fake credit card holder nabbed

By Luige del Puerto

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED AN Iranian after he was caught buying groceries with a bogus credit card at a supermarket in Quezon City. Police said the credit card's logo peeled off as the cashier was verifying the card, giving the con job away.

The police identified the Iranian as Mohammad Panahandeh, 46, who claimed to be a long-time resident of the Philippines, and married to a Filipino. He was described as a resident of Parañaque City.

Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, deputy director of the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), said Panahandeh was paying for P6,600 worth of groceries using a Citibank Visa card at the ShopWise supermarket in Cubao, Quezon City, last Monday when his credit card was exposed as counterfeit.

When arrested, Panahandeh also yielded a Citibank Master Card and a driver's license issued in Guam, both bearing the name "Syros Borzo," police said. He also carried a ShopWise privilege card with the name "Arie Kaklonolee."

A representative of the Credit Card Association of the Philippines confirmed that the cards were counterfeit. The police added that they were checking Panahandeh's alien registration papers.

Purchases

Police investigator Louie Lim said Panahandeh claimed to have gotten the credit cards from "a European" and that he was given 15 percent of the amount of his purchases using the fake cards.

The officer said Shop Wise was checking some P200,000 worth of purchases which might also have been made using fake credit cards.

Panahandeh would be charged with violating RA 8484 or the law on Access Devices Regulation, and Article 178 of the Revised Penal Code which prohibits the use of fictitious names, the CIDG said.

DANGER SIGN
A worker fixes a giant billboard along Edsa in Mandaluyong City unmindful of the danger of hanging from dizzying heights without a proper safety harness.
EDWIN BACASMAS

Fire destroys Senate records, computers

By TJ Burgonio and Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SENATE BUILDING WAS hit by an hour-long fire that damaged electronic equipment and personnel records before dawn yesterday.

Jose Balajadia Jr., the Senate sergeant-at-arms, said the fire broke out in the Human Resources Development Services office on the fourth floor of the five-story Government Service Insurance System building which houses the Senate.

The GSIS building is on Financial Center along Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City.

Balajadia ruled out arson in the incident. Based on the report of city fire officials, the blaze started when the "uninterrupted power supply" (UPS), the standby electrical supply of computers at the HRDS, "short-circuited."

"There was no arson here. The UPS, which wasn't turned off, overheated. That started the fire," he said in a phone interview.

The fire began at around 2:30 a.m., more than seven hours after employees and legislative staff left the building, Balajadia said. Responding firemen were able to put out the fire at around 3:45 a.m. Two computers, a table and a portion of the ceiling were damaged. Fire officials estimated the damage to property at P120,000.

Employees of other offices on the same floor were moved to the second floor when they reported for work later in the day.

METROBRIEFS

Six Manila cops face murder raps

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice yesterday filed charges against more than 10 men, six of them policemen, for allegedly kidnapping a Chinese businessman in 2004. Charged with kidnapping and robbery in the Manila Regional Trial Court were Insp. Carlos Perez Jr., PO3 Jaime Aquino, PO3 Wilhelm Castillo, PO2 George Borabo, PO2 Joselito Sebastian and PO2 Rafaelito Corre, all detailed to the District Police Intelligence Unit of the Manila Police District. Also included in the charge sheet were Eric Sambajon, Joselito Quitoriano, Angel Magundayao and several John Does. The case was based on the complaint of victim Jose Tan Ong who claimed that the respondents, armed with firearms, arrested him on May 19, 2004 in Valenzuela City. Ong said he was taken to MPD headquarters on United Nations Avenue, Manila, where the police threatened to file drug charges against him if his family did not pay P10 million for his release. Ong said he haggled with the policemen who agreed to lower their demand to P2 million. Ong's wife later gave the money to the suspects.
Tina G. Santos

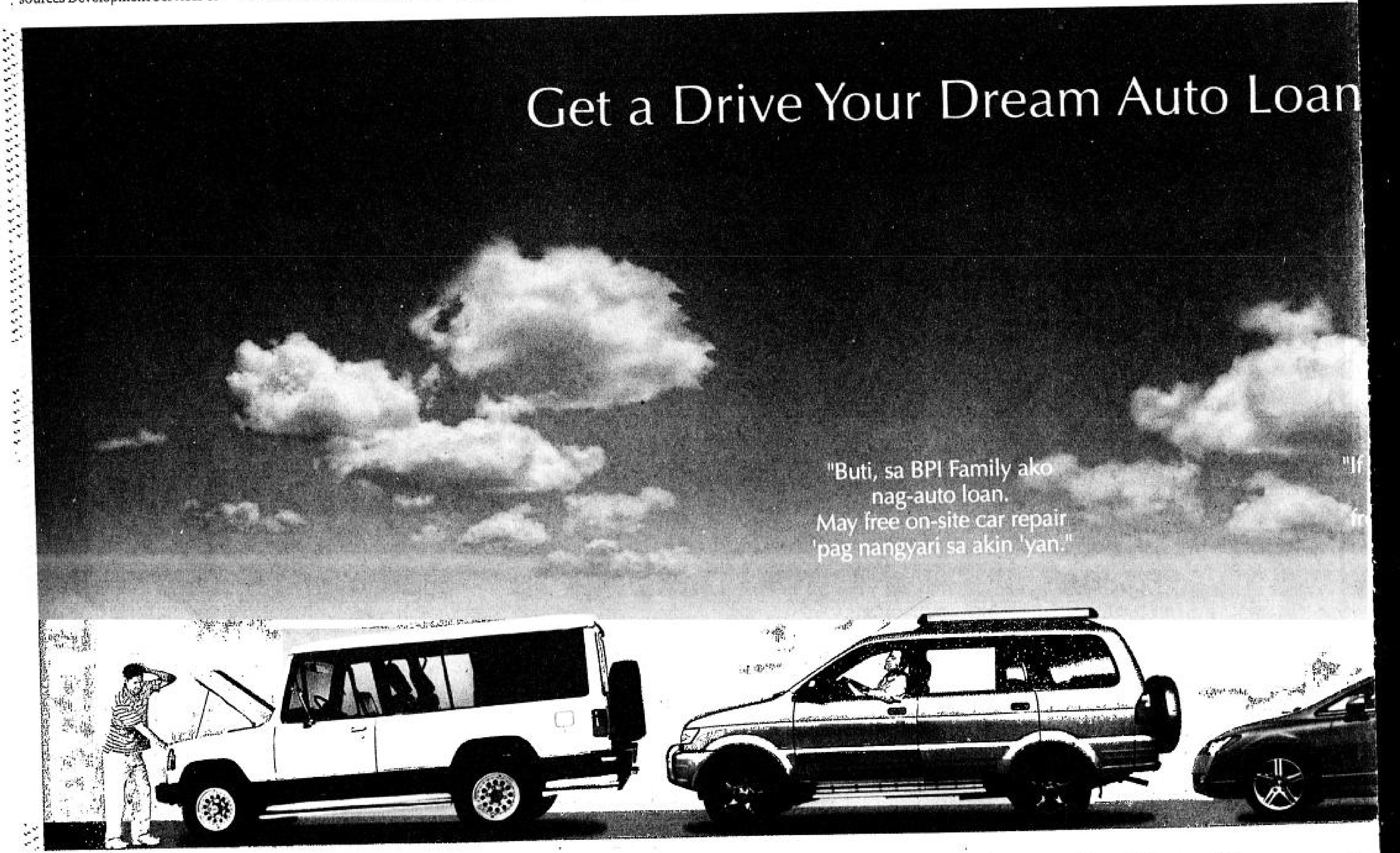
'Help' cost him P450,000

A MEAT dealer ended up losing P450,000 to a "decent-looking" woman who had volunteered to help him inside a bank in Marikina City yesterday morning. "I thought she was an employee of the bank. She was in corporate attire, which looked like a uniform. I was wrong to trust her," Reynaldo Fresno told the INQUIRER. Fresno, 47, said he was at the LandBank branch in Barangay San Roque at about 10 a.m. to deposit money into the account of his relatives in Antique. Since he was unfamiliar with the procedure, he asked around for help. The woman, in her 30s, volunteered to assist him and asked him to fill up several deposit slips. While he was filling up the forms, the woman volunteered to hold the plastic bag containing the money. Fresno said he was grateful for the offer as he was concentrating on filling up the forms as she had instructed. When he was done, the woman—whose name he did not get—was already gone, along with his bag of money. The police said they would ask the bank workers for help in identifying the woman.
Edson C. Tandoc Jr

Perfect spot for meteor show

A "MUST-SEE" spectacle, the Lyrids meteor shower, has been observed for more than 2,600 years and is described by experts as "stars falling like rain." Its peak will be in progress on the night of April 21 up to the early morning of April 22. The best place to view the Lyrids is from a location of high altitude and with low pollution, experts said. Seven Suites Hotel Observatory in the foothills of Antipolo City is one such place. Its state-of-the-art telescope intensifies the viewing experience, although the naked eye is sufficient to witness the shooting stars. An in-house astronomer will be present to give guests a lecture on the Lyrids. Seven Suites Hotel Observatory is located in the Hollywood Hills Subdivision, Sumulong Highway in Antipolo City. For more information, call 6820330 or 6822076.

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ



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Thousands flee as Danube River floods most of southeastern Europe

ZRENJANIN, SERBIA-MONTENEGRO—Emergency workers used heavy machinery in a race against time Monday to build up defenses against flooded rivers threatening large swathes of southeastern Europe.

Thousands of villagers were forced to flee as floodwaters from the overflowing Danube River spread across southern Romania and completely submerged their homes, officials said.

In parts of the Balkans, the Danube recently reached its highest level in more than 100 years.

The dangerous tide of water has been moving eastward beyond Belgrade toward Bulgaria and Romania, where authorities deliberately flooded fields in a bid to spare towns after a similar situation there last year claimed dozens of lives.

Some 3,000 residents of the Romanian village of Rast were evacuated before the surging Danube entirely submerged their homes. Some 115 houses were completely destroyed and another 600 were damaged, local officials said.

Dolj district chief Nicolae Giugea said 10,000 residents of four villages in the area were on standby for evacuation if the water continued to rise.

In Serbia, civil teams backed by the police force and army were reinforcing about 250 km of dikes lined with white sandbags on the bulging banks of several rivers.

Using heavy earth-moving equipment, tractors and industrial trucks, the crews shored up the defenses of Veliko Gradiste and Golubac, two Serbian towns on the border with Romania that are expected to bear the brunt of the flooded Danube within hours.

The situation was made worse by swelling Danube tributaries, including the Tisa and Begej rivers, which meet at the town of Titel north of the Serbian capital.

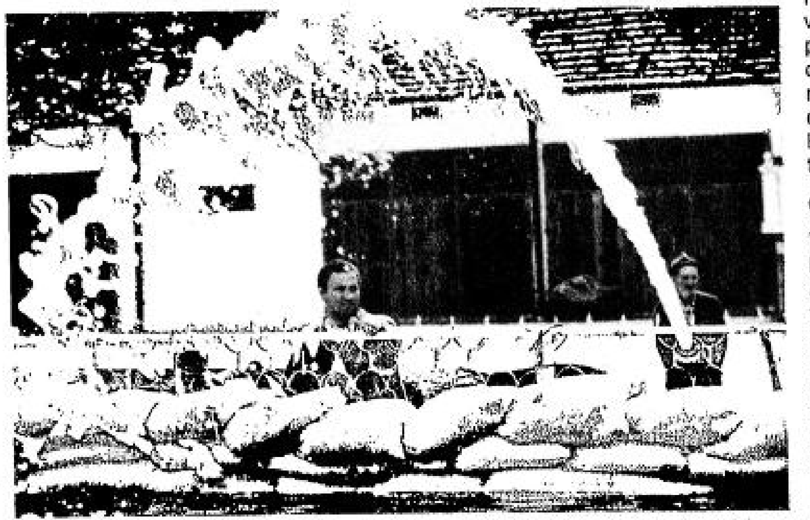
"I don't think I've ever seen the Tisa like this," said Milan, a 52-year-old resident of Titel.

Near Zrenjanin, about 70 km north of Belgrade, the only features that can be seen above the flooded plains are the road linking the town with the capital, and the tops of trees.

"Three hectares of my land is under water," said Ljubomir, a 43-year-old farmer from the area, in a flat and fertile region which is considered Serbia's breadbasket.

"I planned to sow wheat and corn, but who knows whether I will be able to sow anything if the water does not subside in the next four weeks."

A restaurant on the banks of the Tisa was surrounded by water, while a military vessel scraped sand from the bottom of the Begej, to be used for filling bags to protect embankments. *AFP*



VILLAGERS watch a pump remove water from their yard, near the Danube River, in the village of Ritopek near Belgrade April 17. REUTERS

Opus Dei asks 'Da Vinci' film makers for respect

LOS ANGELES—CATHOLIC GROUP Opus Dei has told Sony Pictures that putting a disclaimer on the upcoming movie "The Da Vinci Code" stressing it is a work of fiction would be a welcome show of respect toward the Church.

In the novel "The Da Vinci Code," on which the film is based, Opus Dei is characterized as a secretive group that has for centuries worked to obscure truths about Jesus Christ.

With the movie's opening a month away, Opus Dei and other Christian groups have been sponsoring websites telling people the novel should not be believed.

A letter posted on Good Friday holiday on Opus Dei's website cites media reports as saying Sony Pictures may consider a disclaimer.

"An eventual decision of Sony in this direction would be a sign of respect toward the figure of Jesus Christ, the history of the Church, and the religious beliefs of viewers," the group said in the letter.

Written by Dan Brown, "The Da Vinci Code" book is a thriller in which the main characters must uncover clues they hope will lead them to an important religious relic. Their adversary is an Opus Dei member. The book has sold over 40 million copies.

The plot centers on the search by a man and woman team who use clues in Leonardo Da Vinci's works in a hunt for the "Holy Grail." Christian leaders are up in arms over the novel's assertion that Jesus wed Mary Magdalene and sired her child.

The movie, which is being released by Sony Pictures division Columbia Pictures, stars Tom Hanks and premieres in May at the Cannes film festival in France. Sony Pictures is the media wing of Japanese electronics giant Sony Corp.

"We have no plans to reveal any details regarding what is or isn't in the film until the release," a Sony Pictures spokesperson said in a statement.

Spokesperson Jim Kennedy noted Sony Pictures always viewed the movie as a "a work of fiction ... a thriller, not a religious tract. We believe the filmmakers are going to deliver an exciting movie that will delight audiences, not offend them."

Kennedy also noted that Sony Pictures is supporting a website, thedavincidialogue.com, where interested people can read expert opinions about issues raised by the book and movie. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Bus crash kills 63 in Mexico

VERACRUZ, Mexico—At least 63 people died Monday after a bus they were riding veered off a mountain road in central Mexico and fell down a ravine, authorities said. "We have 63 people confirmed dead," Ranulfo Marquez, head of regional rescue services, told W Radio. "Three (men) survived, they are in critical condition." The bus plunged 200 meters down into a ravine and rescue workers struggled to retrieve bodies from the remote location. "A lot of bodies, mostly of children, were flung all over," said David Betanzos Espinoza, civil defense director in the nearby town of Ixtaczoquitlan. *AFP*

9 killed in Tel Aviv bombing

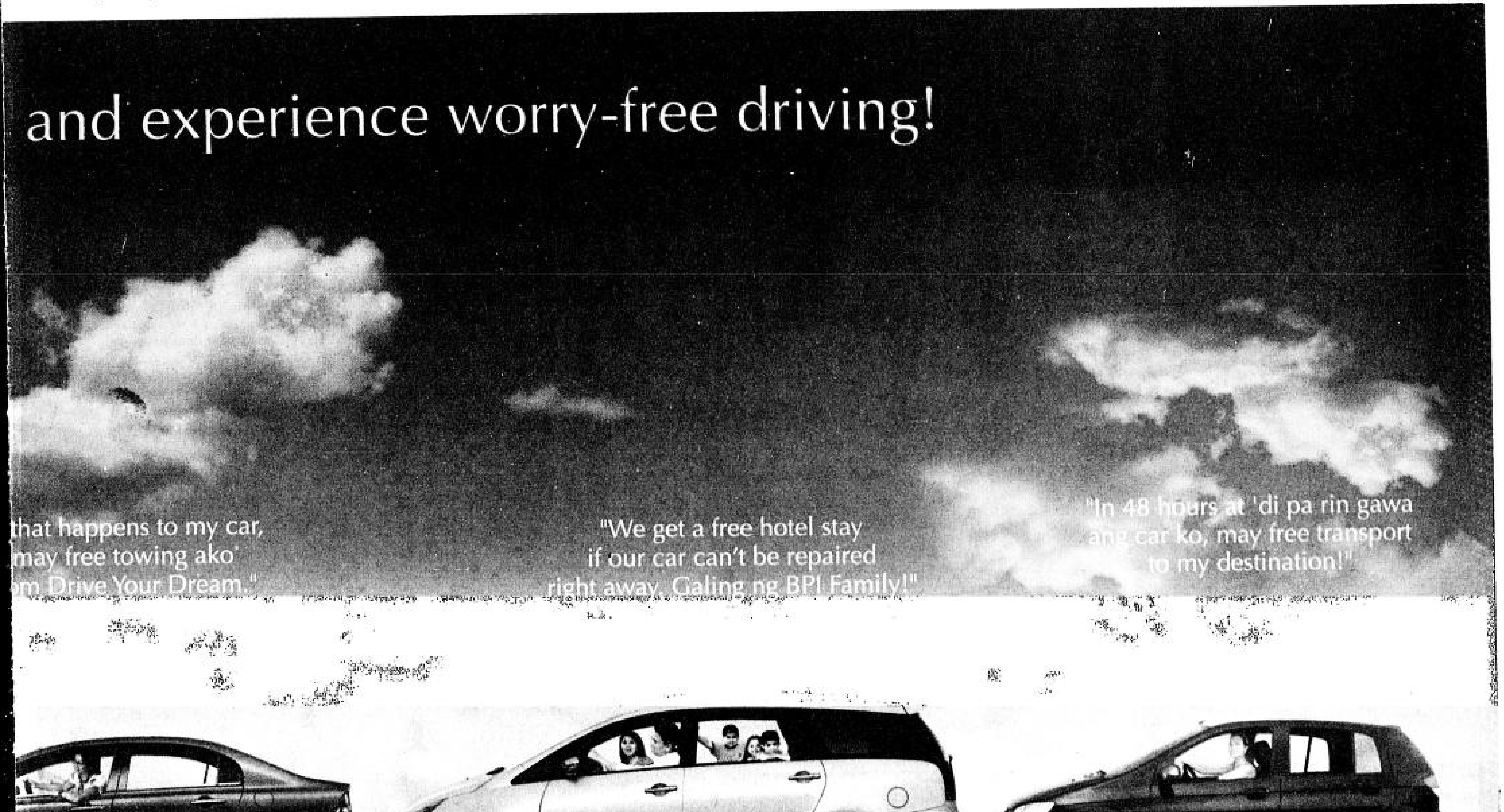
TEL AVIV—The Israeli army raided the Gaza Strip late Monday hours after nine people were killed and dozens wounded in Israel's commercial capital Tel Aviv when a Palestinian bomber blew himself up in the deadliest suicide attack of the last 20 months. The bomb went off next to a fast-food stand at lunchtime in the southern Neveh Sha'anan district, close to the site of Tel Aviv's old bus station. The area has been the scene of several previous attacks, including one in January. The blast—the deadliest since a suicide bombing in August 2004—was claimed by the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad. *AFP*

Nepali troops fire on ralliers

KATHMANDU—Nepali troops opened fire on anti-monarchy protesters in an eastern town on Monday and killed one man, witnesses and officials said, as international pressure increased on King Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. It was the fifth person to be killed in 12 days of violent pro-democracy demonstrations that have brought the impoverished Himalayan nation to a standstill. Hundreds have been wounded. One person had been killed and five wounded, they said by telephone. *Reuters*

US military deaths rise

WASHINGTON—US military deaths in Iraq have risen sharply in April after five straight months of decline. Last month, there were 31 US military fatalities, the fewest since 20 died in February 2004 in the lowest monthly toll of the 3-year-old war. So far this month, there have been at least 48 American fatalities, according to a count of military death announcements. Many of the deaths again occurred in Anbar province. There have been 2,378 US military deaths in the war, the Pentagon said. *Reuters*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World powers meet on Iran impasse

MOSCOW—WORLD POWERS held talks here Tuesday on how to keep Iran's nuclear program in check, with US calls for strong UN action meeting resistance from Russia and China and open defiance from Tehran.

Russian officials said the talks were private and provided no details on the agenda, though Western diplomats said the meeting of political directors from three European Union countries—the "EU-3"—along with China, Russia and the United States would take place at a working dinner.

The United States made clear ahead of the Moscow meeting that it would continue to argue in favor of early and muscular action by the UN Security Council.

In a statement posted on its Moscow Embassy website, the United States said its representative at the meeting, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, "will discuss the need for significant action by the United Nations Security Council."

Washington accuses Tehran of working secretly to build nuclear weapons under cover of a nuclear energy program it is developing with Russian assistance. Iran denies this charge and says the program is strictly for producing nuclear energy.

The Moscow talks come after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad last week announced that the Islamic state had mastered the nuclear fuel cycle and had successfully enriched a small amount of uranium for use as fuel for a nuclear power station.

Iran says it has the same right as any other country that has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to its own nuclear energy program and says it is prepared to allow close international supervision of this program by the UN nuclear regulatory agency.

The United States counters that Iran is a unique case because it failed to disclose key parts of its nuclear program for 18 years and because its leaders publicly call for the destruction of Israel.

The Security Council voted on March 29 to give Iran 30 days to suspend uranium enrichment work pending closer scrutiny by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) whose chief, Mohamed ElBaradei, must deliver a status report by the end of that period to the council.

All six parties represented at Tuesday's meeting say they share the goal of preventing Iran from acquiring the capacity to build nuclear weapons. They differ considerably however on how to achieve this goal.

The United States would like to see the Security Council begin imposing sanctions soon and has refused to rule out use of force against the Islamic republic.

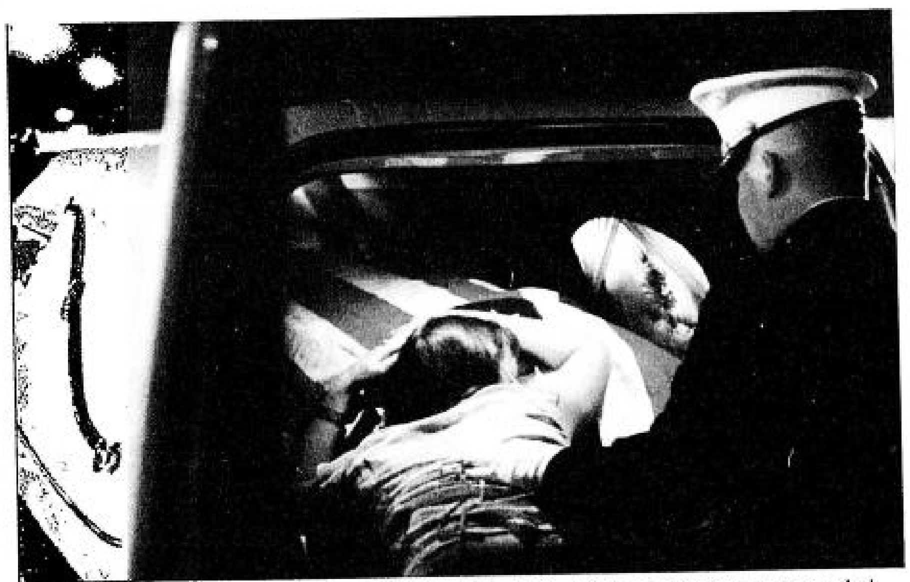
The EU-3, which pursued negotiations for several years aimed at persuading Iran to steer clear of sensitive nuclear work, also supports sanctions but opposes military action.

Russia and China, both of which have extensive commercial and strategic ties with Iran, insist that it is too early even to speak of sanctions, arguing that they will inevitably backfire.

"We are convinced that neither sanctions nor the path of force will lead to a resolution of the problem," Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Mikhail Kamynin said hours before the Moscow meeting was scheduled to start.

Iran meanwhile continued to talk tough.

President Ahmadinejad vowed in a speech in Tehran Tuesday that Iran would "cut off the hand of any aggressor." *AFP*



THIS PHOTO is one of the 20 images in Todd Heisler's Final Salute story that was awarded the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for feature photography. Minutes after her husband's casket arrived, Katherine Cathey fell onto the flag. When 2nd Lt. James Cathey left for Iraq, he wrote a letter to Katherine that read, in part, "there are no words to describe how much I love you, and will miss you. I will also promise you one thing: I will be home. I have a wife and a new baby to take care of, and you guys are my world." AP

Two Hurricane Katrina-hit newspapers win Pulitzers

NEW YORK—TWO NEWSPAPERS HARD-HIT by Hurricane Katrina won the top US journalism prizes on Monday for their coverage of the storm—even as the deadly water and wind damaged their offices and left many staffers homeless.

The Times-Picayune of New Orleans received the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting. It also shared the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service with The Sun Herald of Biloxi, Mississippi, for their handling of the Aug. 29 storm and aftermath.

The 90th annual Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism, Letters, Drama and Music were announced by Columbia University in New York City.

"The Board regards this as extraordinary work by two papers ... in the aftermath of Katrina, which is considered the nation's worst natural disaster," said Sig Gissler, Pulitzer Prize administrator.

The storm battered hundreds of miles of the US Gulf Coast, killing about 1,600 people and leaving hundreds of thousands of others homeless.

In New Orleans, 80 percent of which was flooded, most businesses have not reopened and many residents have not returned. Complaints have persisted that the federal government has failed to provide adequate relief.

The two award-winning newspapers provided their coverage even as they, too, suffered from the storm's wrath.

The New Orleans paper's offices were flooded, and many of its staffers were forced to flee, when the city's levees gave way. A makeshift newsroom was set up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, about 80 miles away.

News of the prizes evoked tears and cheers from the reporters, editors and family members who gathered in the Times-Picayune newsroom in anticipation of the celebration.

"We have an extraordinary team of journalists and employees in this company who are absolutely dedicated to getting this paper out, no matter what the conditions are, people who lost their homes, who didn't know what had become of their families and who kept on working," said editor Jim Amoss.

Biloxi's Sun Herald won "for its valorous and comprehensive coverage of Hurricane Katrina, providing a lifeline for devastated readers," the Pulitzer Board said. The Public Service award is considered the most prestigious.

For photographs that "depicted the chaos and pain" of the hurricane, The Dallas Morning News won the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography. *Reuters*

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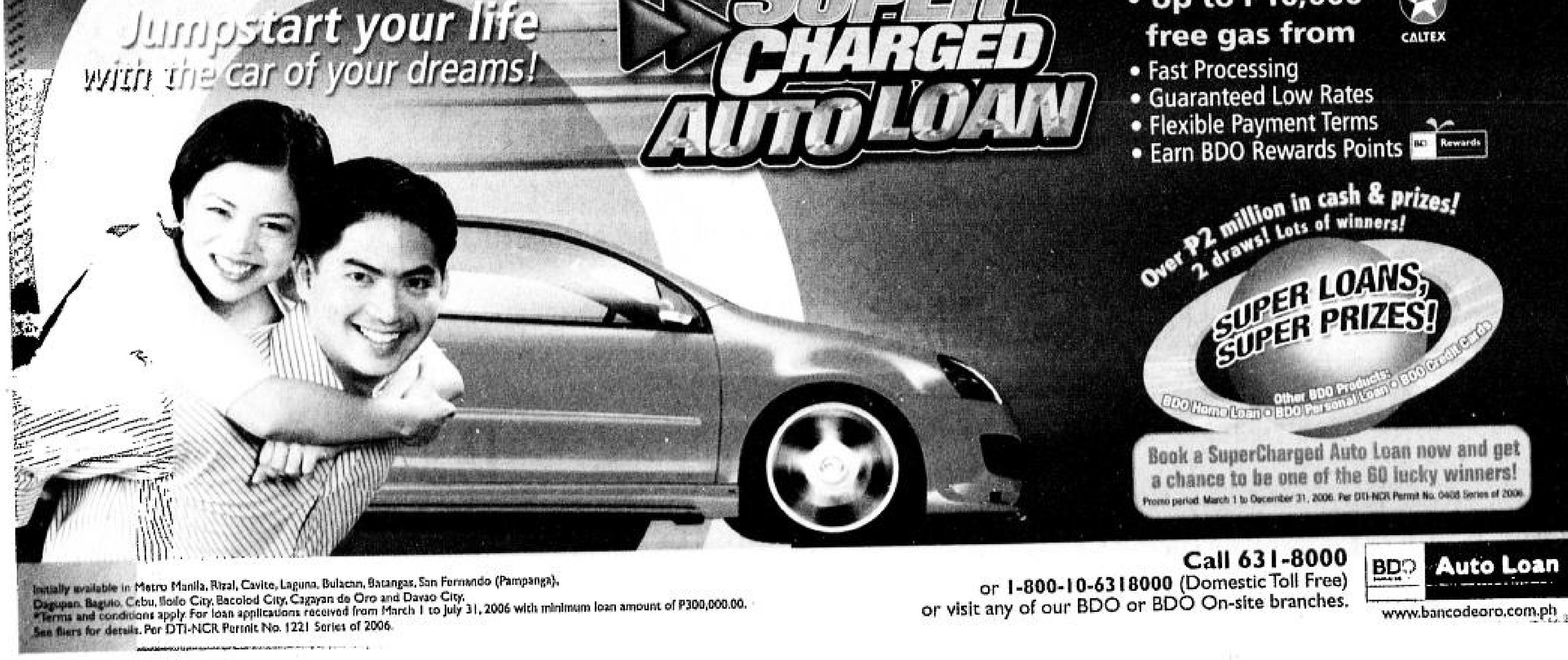

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EXPO YEAR 3
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Abdon ties Alejandro for 36-hole lead

JIKJIK ABDON BIRDIED THREE OF THE FIRST four holes on the way to a two-under-par 70 yesterday for a share of the boys' Class A lead with Miko Alejandro after the second round of the Callaway Junior World qualifying tournament of the Samsung Jungolf Tour.

Abdon turned in nines of 34-46 on four birdies and two bogeys as he forged a tie with solo first-round frontrunner Alejandro at 145 at Sherwood Hills Golf Club course in Trece Martires, Cavite.

Alejandro needed a birdie on the 18th to remain on top, finishing with a 73 in this 108-hole qualifier backed chiefly by Samsung, Philippine Airlines and Callaway. Mico Yee was 2 behind.

Second round results:

Class A: Boys—145 Miko Alejandro 72-73, Jikjik Abdon 75-70, 147 Mico Yee 74-73; Girls—152 Bambee dela Paz 77-75, 158 Debbie de Villa 81-77, 162 Kathleen Uy 81-81, 162 Sunshine Baraquiel 84-78

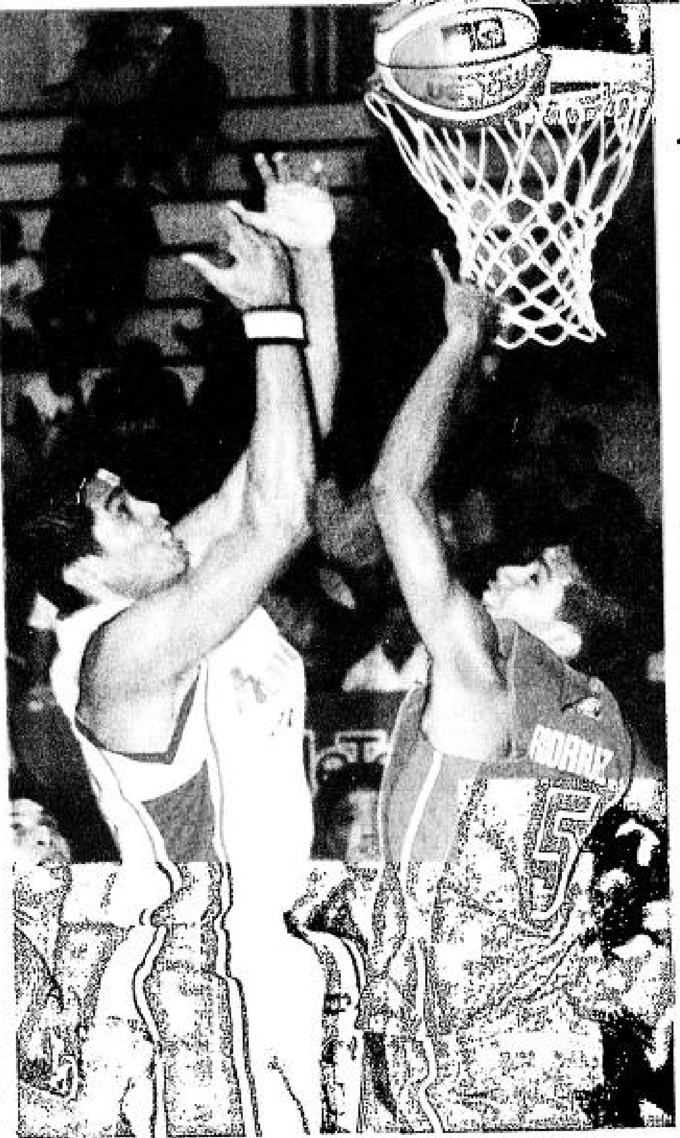
Class B (13-14): Boys—150 Wolen Superal 74-76, 161 Marcel Puyat 79-82, 163 Carlos Tinio 81-82; Girls—151 Cyna Rodriguez 76-75, 154 Mia Piccio 75-79, Regine de Guzman 83

Class C (9-10): Girls—147 Dottie Ardina 76-71, 154 Katya dela Cruz 73-81, 155 Maan Legaspi 79-76 (Boys play suspended due to darkness)

Class D (9-10): Boys—148 JR Gonzales 69-79, Miggy Yee 76-72, 152 AR Ramos 76-76; Girls—166 Princess Superal 85-81, 180 Daniella Uy 86-94, 190 Felicia Medalla 96-94

Class E (7-8): Boys—126 Rupert Zaragosa 65-61, 130 Justin Dy 67-63, 132 Raymart Tolentino 64-68; Girls—131 Rachita Vasandani 69-62, 139 Mia Legaspi 67-72, 142 Bianca Pagdanganan 71-71

Class F (6 under): Boys—132 Shailesh Vasandani 58-74, 146 Ryan Monsalve 78-68, 189 Mikael Robles 94-95; Girls—166 Chloe Reyes 82-84, 180 Kristine Torralba 87-93, 188 Ashia Nocum 91-97



JOEL Solis of Hapee (left) battles for the rebound against Larry Rodriguez of Montaña in their game yesterday. ERIK ARAZAS

Aces Compton, Santos come to the rescue

By Jasmine W. Payo

ALEX COMPTON SHOT EIGHT OF HIS 16 points in extra time and the Montaña Jewels thwarted Hapee-PCU, 90-81, yesterday in the PBL Unity Cup at the San Andres Gym.

Still suffering from a nagging right calf injury, Compton powered the Jewels to the solo lead with their fifth win in six outings.

"He had a good game, I'm surprised that he played that well because he hasn't fully recovered," said Montaña coach Nel Parado.

Veteran forward Eric dela Cuesta also contributed 16 markers for the Jewels, who nearly came apart in the second half.

Earlier, Magnolia Ice Cream turned to Arwind Santos in the final period to quell Toyota Otis' late rally and post an 81-77 victory.

Heating up just in time, Santos unloaded 12 of his 17 points in the fourth canto after a relatively silent first three quarters.

"Arwind is like that, if you give him space to shoot, he'll take it," said coach Koy Banal after Magnolia improved its slate to 3-3. "He's composed and confident."

Kelly Williams also played true to form, collecting 16 markers and 13 boards after a miserable shooting performance in his last game.

Toyota Otis slipped to second place and joined Rain or Shine at 4-2.

The Jewels also found it tough to secure the victory. Trailing by three in the dying seconds, it took a three-pointer by Robert Sanz in the last 7.1 ticks of regulation to give Montaña another shot at the solo leadership.

The scores:

First Game

MAGNOLIA 81—Santos 17, Williams 16, Valenzuela 15, Isip 12, Misolas 7, Chan 6, Barcellano 4, Jones 2, Rizada 2, Te 0, Co 0.

TOYOTA OTIS 77—Devance 29, Aldave 16, Aban 9, Andaya 8, Coronel 4, Casio 4, Larong 3, Oreta 2, Daa 2, Baluyot 0, Cabahug 0, Bautista 0, Alcaraz 0.

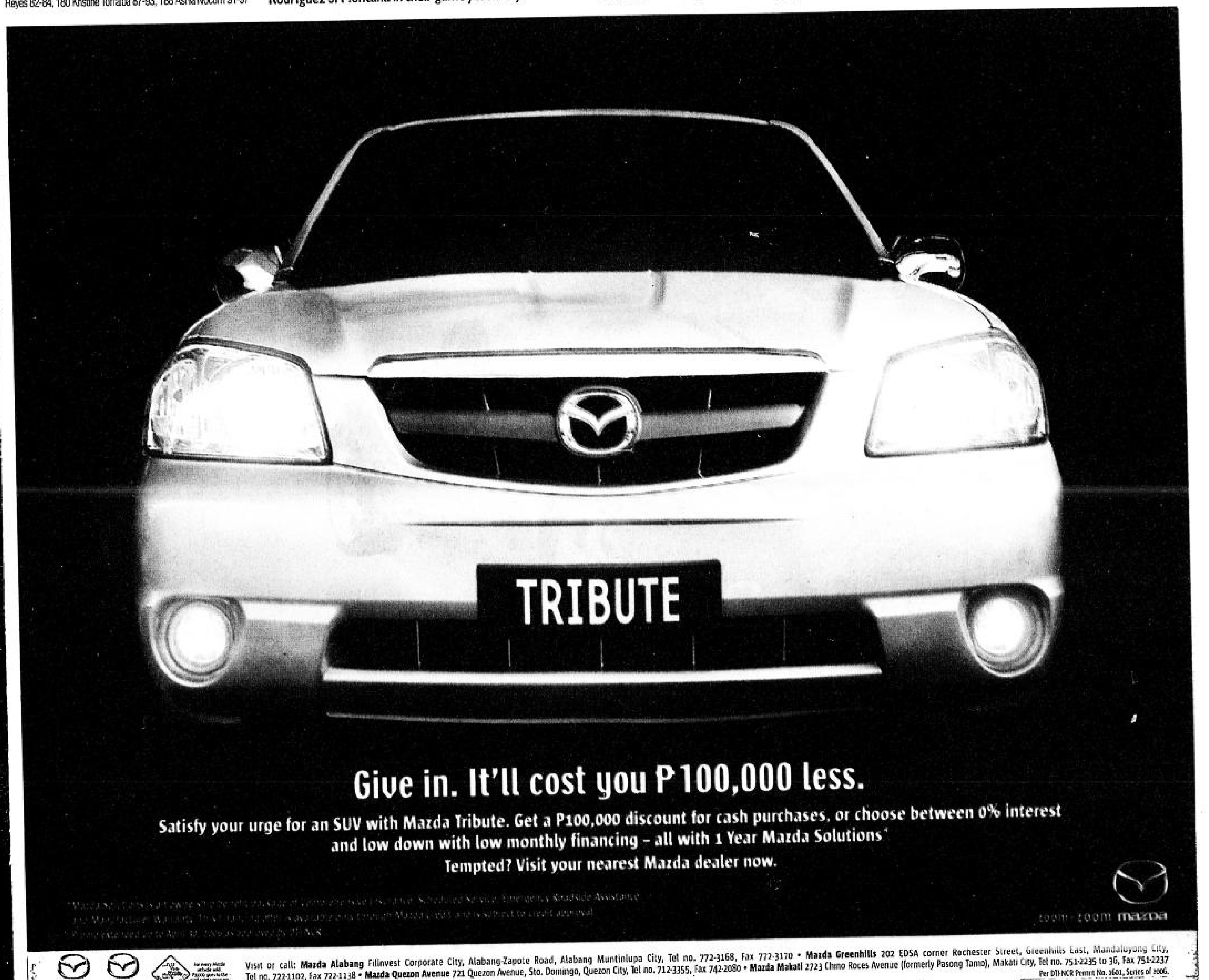
Quarters: 20-15, 45-32, 62-48, 81-77

Second Game

MONTAÑA 90—Compton 16, Dela Cuesta 16, Baguion 13, Bono 12, Juntilla 10, Vergara 8, Rodriguez 6, Espiritu 4, Guerrero 3, Magpayo 2, Evangelista 0.

HAPEE-PCU 81—Castro 19, Espinas 15, Moreno 11, Sanz 10, Bucao 9, Gonsales 6, Solis 4, Guevarra 4, Belga 2, Canlas 1, Nallon 0, Razon 0, Garrido 0.

Quarters: 20-13, 40-28, 52-48, 68-68, 90-81



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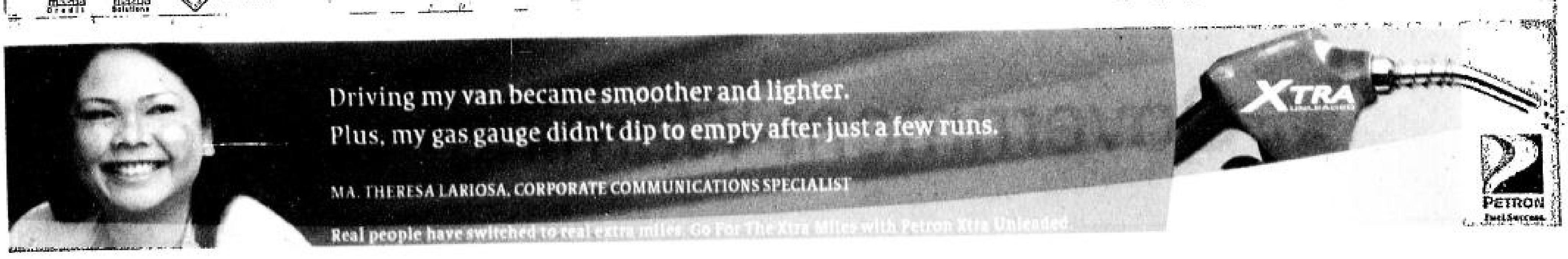

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SPORTSWATCH

Last call for Coach E bets

THE COACH E Summer Basketball Tournament for participants six to 16 years old will be held on April 22, 23 and 27. International Basketball Academy (IBA) president Xavy Nunag said individual and team entries can still join by calling 631-1195 or 0921-7562639, or e-mailing the academy at iba_phil@yahoo.com. The team field includes San Beda Manila, San Beda Taytay, San Beda Alabang, Southridge, Ateneo, Don Bosco, Antipolo Lady of Lourdes School and Xavier.

LSGH summer cage camp

THE SECOND module of the LSGH Summer Basketball Camp opens on May 1. The program is designed for elementary and high school students aged 7-17. Non-La Sallians are welcome to enroll. There are three courses offered: Beginner 2, Intermediate 2 and Team. Sessions will be held at the LSGH wooden courts from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The camp will end on May 17. Registration fee is P2,000, inclusive of a reversible jersey. For inquiries, call 722-7717 or 721-2000 local 718.

Makati derby sets 70 fights

THE WTJ House Kristo 3-Cock Derby starts today at the Makati Coliseum with 70 matches on tap. The derby, sponsored by B-Meg Derby Ace, will feature prized gamebirds of Toto Lacson, Boy Javier, Jake Macasaet, Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud, William Co, Magdangal Elma, Leo Magpantay, Gerry Ferros, Aying Keh, Terry Santos, Emil Chua, Edwin Vittali, Ferdie Eusebio, Vandolf Go, Butchoy Olano, Amor Salvanera, Toto Sevilla, Ram Lopez, Cesar Tangcad, Gerry Sunga and Michael San Pablo. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

GCAP 5-cocker series today

THE GENTLEMEN Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 5-cock derby series resumes at the San Juan Coliseum today with 70 fights on the roster. Rep. Butch Pichay and Rey Briones (Spartan's Pichay, 19 points) lead the GCAP Cocker of the Year race of the series sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. They will be challenged by Jun Topacio (JT Emerald Complexor 3000, 18), Patrick Antonio (Sagupaan Complexor 3000, 15.5), Louie Cua (LCC Leonard, 15.5), Gerry Ramos (Against All Odds, 15. 5) and Manny Pacquiao and Antonio (Super Pacman Sagupaan,15).

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Empire Trish (6), Skip Away (3), Pulilan Beauty/Happy Again (1), Awesome Power (7)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Collective Dreams (8), Playing Cool (3), Wynona Raider (2), Sir Olizon (10), Eden's Quest (7)

Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Sound Value (3), Il Amorosa (7), Better Strike (6), Top Of D'Line (8)

Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Hard To Find (7), Joker (6), Lucky Joe (14), Vitality (1), Apple Splash (3)

Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Manila's Style/Magpakailanman (6), Renzie Stays (1), War Bird (3), Hidden Pleasure (9), War Bird (3)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Tini Bambini (3), Truly Impressive (10), Reason To Believe (8), Stradivarius (14), Worth Ur While (5)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Mr. Victory (7), Cash Feeder (8), Sharp Cookie (1), Irish Connection (6), Classy Pages (3)

Race 8—(Super/Qrt/Tri)—Magic Dancer (12), West N Wild (11), Desert Breeze (9), Angel Eeyes (10), I Remain (2), Streisand (5)

Loyzaga returns to a lost kingdom

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

THE GREAT CARLOS LOYZAGA MAY have not realized it. But, unlike Flash Elorde who, years after his death, finally had a successor in Manny Pacquiao, Loyzaga's kingly reign on Philippine basketball has remained intact.

Nobody among the slew of big-time pros has proved worthy enough to take over the throne.

OK, there were more colorful, wealthier pretenders to the kingship.

Robert Jaworski definitely led the contenders.

The Big J, who went on to become a senator, was easily the biggest draw in the history of Philippine basketball.

He starred at a time when the basketball fever was at its most intense here. The game, a national passion, was lapped up like religion by team fanatics who never hesitated to worship their idols on the hardcourt.

But did Jaworski or any of other big names—Mon Fernandez, Alvin Patrimonio, Danny Ildefonso, etc.—come close to unseating King Caloy?

Sorry, but despite the multimillion-peso price tags of these challengers, the crown would not fit.

* * *

Loyzaga paid dear old Manila a visit some two weeks back and was treated to a regular basketball show by star players, both of the native and Fil-Am variety.

Did he find time to wonder why nobody has succeeded him?

OK, there were more than enough celebrities, but they could, at best, be ranked only as that: big names.

If these instant millionaires made any difference, it was in the entertainment value they would dish out in games where self-preservation was often the central theme.

Well, Loyzaga was himself a superstar, but he was the rarest of celebrities.

If he ever shone bright, like the sun itself, it was because of selfless gallantry on the hardcourt, mainly in international campaigns.

He shone at a time when the game was played by hardcourt soldiers with fire in their bellies.

It was the golden era of Philippine basketball. Loyzaga played tall, fueled by heroic temper; and neither would he stammer nor hesitate to risk hairdo or limb in crucial physical battles.

* * *

Years after Loyzaga's retirement, expectant fans would be advised that nobody among the glittering rich stars in the PBA could hold a candle to the King.

A likely successor should be one possessed with the finest qualities of Philip Cesar and Fernandez during their height, although the proposed Caloy clone would still fall short.

Caloy Loyzaga, an original, would be impossible to copy.

Nobody ever again presided over great games here with the pure poise, grace and regal bearing of King Caloy.

Luminous in the famous red jersey of the Yco Painters, whose dynastic reign Loyzaga pillared like El Cid, he was handsome heroism personified, a tall, pigeon-chested monarch standing erect, unperturbed amidst the regular hysteria and bedlam at the old Rizal Coliseum, the original basketball mecca.

* * *

The kingship, still alive, was anything but symbolic.

For a brief review of his greatness, Loyzaga, originally with the San Beda Red Lions, first donned the national jersey in 1951, when the Philippines won the basketball championship in the first Asian Games in India. However, he started stealing the fancy of sports fans in 1954, when he spearheaded the title defense for the RP team in the second Asian Games in Manila. That same year, he powered the Philippine squad to a historic third-place finish in the World Basketball Championship in Rio de Janeiro.

That fabled national squad, coached by Herr Silva, was brilliantly skippered by the great Lauro "The Fox" Mumar.

However, it was Loyzaga's superb all-around might and deft that earned him a Mythical Team berth of the 1954 world tournament.

Would he have made it to the NBA with his worth and credentials?

Why not? If he had been invited to play for Brazil's world-famous Fiamengco team, that should have more than confirmed his big stature as an internationalist.

* * *

Nobody here has come close to becoming another Great Difference, the real thing.

The King, now 75, returned appearing more portly. After a quadruple bypass, the once princely locks gone, he now looked more like a pope.

Still, Loyzaga should have been accorded a welcome befitting a returning monarch.

Instead, what he came to observe upon arrival was a dismal scenario. Everything he had fought for, the basketball kingdom itself, has been razed to the ground.

Keep your act together, Loyzaga advised the warring power players in Philippine basketball.

Of course, he was asking for the impossible.

The BAP, which had to be banned due to lack of direction and a horrendous record, that included the RP flag being treated like garbage in international meets, continued to enjoy the patronage of the international body.

The Great Difference had every reason to be greatly dismayed.

In fact, those who were in Seoul (for the meeting between Fiba sec gen patrick Baumann and Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco) claimed they had reason to suspect the gender soundness of decision-makers in the international basketball federation.

They also asked: Whose heart melted when the eyes of one top Fiba man met the soulful stare of a familiar Asian in an earlier conference.

King Caloy, of course, has stopped asking questions.

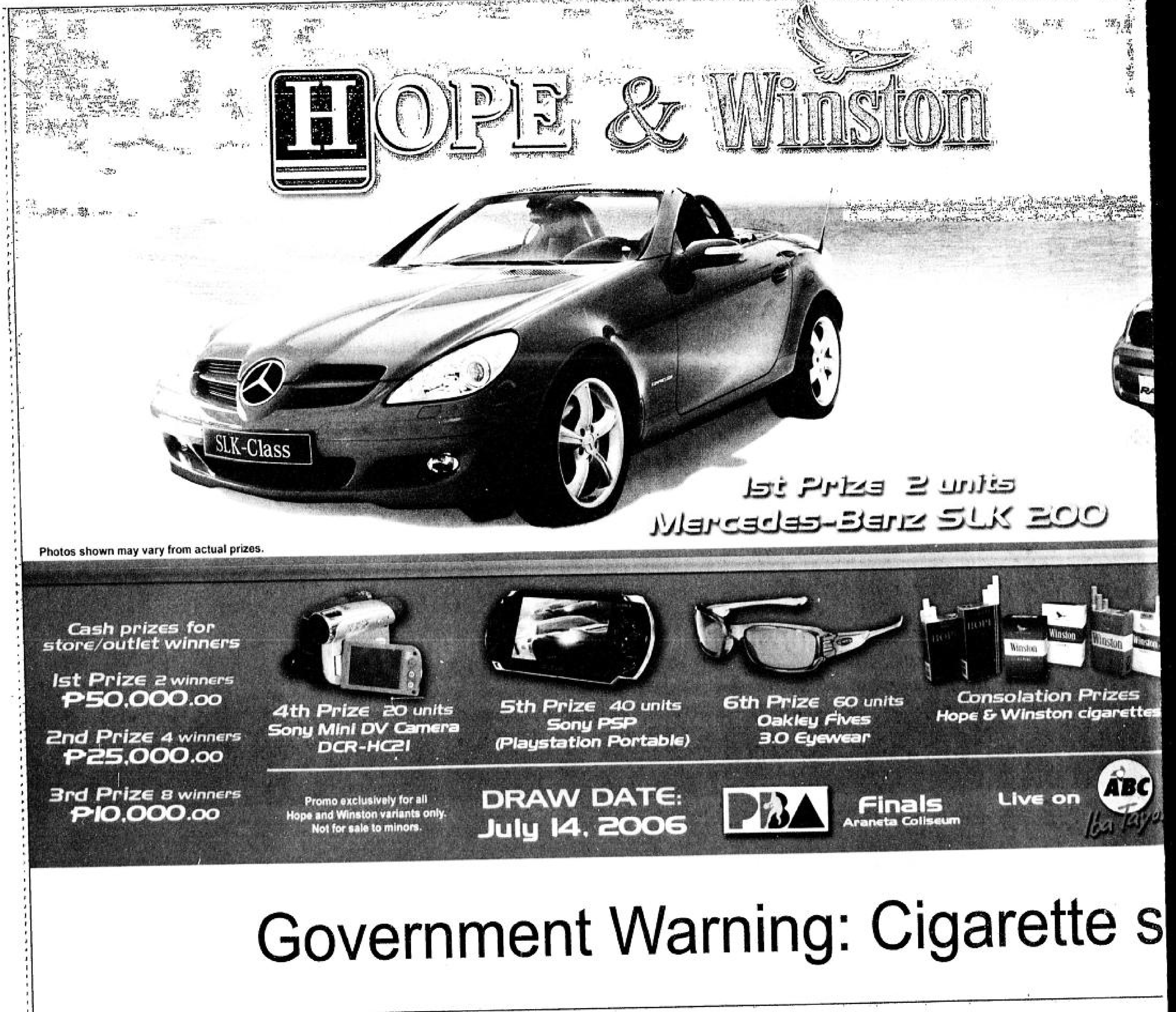
He knows there could be hope again only after Philippine basketball is taken out of the sissy grip of fake, squatting leaders and restored to the hands of true men with honor, integrity and pure heroic hearts.

SAN Miguel Beer's Dorian Pe
game. Peña is one of five Beer

Mantawi
Iloilo Wa

STANDINGS	W	L
VISAYAS DIVISION		
*M. Lhuillier-Cebu	3	0
L'masters-Toledo	2	1
Mantawi Traders	1	2
*Toyota-Iloilo	0	3
West Negros	x	x
MINDANAO DIVISION		
Iligan City	6	1
PacMan-GenSan	5	2
P. Pharma-MisOr	4	4
Montaña-Davao	4	4
Cagayan de Oro	0	8

*still playing at press time



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PBA Finals Araneta Coliseum
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Streaking SMB shoots for No. 8

SAN MIGUEL BEER IS ON A SCORCHING STREAK so stunning that even coach Jong Uichico can't find the right words to explain it.

"I don't know what's gotten into the team," said Uichico after the Beermen clubbed sister team Barangay Ginebra, 104-93, to cap a five-game winning streak going into the Holy Week break.

The Beermen will try to resume that run as they go up against the skidding Air21 Express today in the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

"They're really playing so well and they're doing it as a team," said Uichico of the Beermen, whose starters are all in the top 15 of the statistical race for the conference MVP award.

Danny Seigle, the spearhead of a Beermen core dubbed 4-D, leads that race with 604 statistical points built around averages of 22.6 points, 10.4 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 1.5 steals per game.

Coca Cola's Ali Peek comes next with 558 points.

The rest of the 4-D include Danny Ildefonso (third), Dorian Peña (fourth) and Dondon Hontiveros (15th). The fifth person in the San Miguel Beer starting unit, Olsen Racela, is No. 14.

"I don't know how to explain it but they're not losing their determination to win despite those consecutive victories," said Uichico.

And while San Miguel Beer's morale—battered by a mediocre performance in the previous tournament—is on a high, the Air21 Express will go into the match coming off a 103-88 humbling at the hands of the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals last Easter Sunday.

The Express sport a 3-6 card and stay just one game ahead of the Sta. Lucia Realtors in the standings.

Like San Miguel Beer, the Coca-Cola Tigers have been making a good account of themselves in the tournament. The indomitable Tigers' second-best 6-2 mark also surprises considering that they, along with the Beermen, were the early vacationists in the previous tournament.

The Tigers try to stretch a two-game roll when they collide with the Purefoods Chunkee Giants in the other game.

June Navarro

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	7	2
Coca-Cola	6	2
Purefoods	5	3
Ginebra	4	4
Talk N Text	4	4
Alaska	4	5
Air21	3	6
Red Bull	3	6
Sta. Lucia	2	6

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Air21 vs San Miguel Beer
7:35 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Purefoods

ia challenges Coca-Cola's Ali Peek in a recent neh in the Top 15 statistics-wise. ERIK ARAZAS

Pals, Kings tandems lead All-Star squads

ASI TAULAVA AND JIMMY ALAPAG have been inseparable since Talk 'N Text made them the cornerstone of its franchise. It seems that they will be a regular couple, too, in the coming All-Star matches.

Taulava and Alapag were again named starters for the South squad that will try to avenge last year's defeat to the North when the PBA All-Star weekend takes place from April 27 to 29 in Misamis Oriental.

The South squad will battle a North team spearheaded by two players who have also been inseparable—Barangay Ginebra's Mark Caguioa and Jayjay Helterbrand.

Eric Menk, Danny Seigle and James Yap complete the South team's starting five, while Romel Adducul, Danny Ildefonso and Enrico Villanueva fill up the rest of North's starting unit.

"We would like to thank all of the PBA fans who took their time to vote and choose the starters for both the North and South squads," said commissioner Noli Eala.

The event is presented by Hope Cigarette and supported by Xtreme Magic Sing and Welcoat Paints. Other backers include Sunbolt fun drinks, Chowking, Mentos, Accel and Air21.

Shakey's V League ties up with ABC-5

THE SECOND SEASON OF THE Shakey's V League is assured of a bigger and better coverage with the entry of the tournament's new television partner, ABC-5.

"We've finally found a stable partner in ABC-5, which shares our vision and works hard to promote the sport," said Jun Bernardino, president of the organizing Sports Vision Management Group Inc. (SVMGI).

Bernardino presented the league's new TV partner during yesterday's resumption of the PSA Forum at the Pantalan restaurant in Manila. The public sports program is sponsored by Pagcor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

ABC-5 also airs games of the Philippine Basketball Association.

"We are very happy to be part of this partnership with SVMGI and Shakey's in strengthening our sports program," said ABC 5 programming director Winston de la Cruz.

"We would like to say that we're one with Shakey's and Sports Vision in bringing volleyball closer to the hearts of Filipinos," said Sienna Olaso, production director of ABC 5.

Traders clobber rriors, post 1st win

MANDAUE CITY—THE MANtawi Traders finally broke into the win column with a 79-71 win Monday night over the Toyota-Iloilo Warriors, 79-71, in the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) Firs t Conference at the Mandaue City Cultural and Sports Complex.

The Traders of Mayor Thadeo Ouano trailed the Warriors in the first three periods until Joseph Guangco, Leode Garcia and 6-foot-7 Rino Berame starred in a 14-4 Mantawi run to begin the fourth period and put the Traders on top for good, with 5:41 left to play, 68-62.

The scores:

MANTAWI 79—Guangco 21, Berame 15, Sevilla 10, Almacin 8, Garcia 7, Calo 7, Pepito 5, Akad 4, Ducay 2, Lozano 0, Arellano 0.

TOYOTA-ILOILO 71—Senierez 27, Poral 20, Sencil 7, Bautista 6, Sina-on 5, Sinco 4, Antenor Cruz 2, Leonida 0, Unarce 0.

Quarters: 15-20, 42-45, 54-58, 79-71

BADMINTON OPENING: San Fernando Mayor Oscar Rodriquez and JVC (Phils.) Inc. president-CEO Hideyuki Takato (third and fourth from left) make the ceremonial serve to kick off the Pampanga leg of the JVC Regional Badminton Championships at Excel Badminton Center in San Fernando City. With them are (from left) JVC GM Kazue Salud, Pampanga sports director Gil Cortez, Excel owner Jojo Tanglao and JVC marketing manager Rachel Bacsal.

Pacman to train in Abap's Baguio camp

ONE LESS WORRY FOR TEAM Pacquiao.

The Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) yesterday allowed Team Pacquiao to use its training facilities at Teacher's Camp in Baguio City as the Filipino ring idol hones up for his fight against Mexican Oscar Larios on July 2 at the Araneta Coliseum.

"Team Pacquiao, represented by Rex 'Wackee' Salud, requested that Manny use our gym in Baguio," said Abap president Manny Lopez. "It was a request I gladly permitted."

Lopez, also a Philippine Olympic Committee vice president, said Pacquiao wanted to rub shoulders with national boxers preparing for the Doha Asian Games in December.

At present, 25 boxers are training in Baguio under the coaching staff headed by Patricio Gaspi. *Dennis U. Eroa, Inquirer Libre sports editor*

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4.) The stores/outlets have a chance to win cash prizes in the major prize category (1st to 3rd prizes only). In the event that the major prize winner is also the store/outlet owner, he or she gets to win both the corresponding major prize and the cash prize for the store/outlet.

5.) If a winning entry does not bear the name and address of the store/outlet, the entry will still be valid but no store/outlet winner will be declared for the corresponding cash prize.

6.) Promo is from April 3, 2006 to July 14, 2006. All raffle entries will be accepted only until 12 midnight of June 30, 2006. No more raffle entries shall be accepted beyond this date.

7.) Major prize winners (1st to 3rd prizes) will be drawn LIVE on July 14, 2006, to be held during the 4th game of the PBA All-Filipino Conference Finals at the Araneta Coliseum and simulcast over ABC Channel 5 at 7PM. Other prize winners (4th to 6th prizes & consolation prizes) will be pre-drawn on July 7, 2006.

8.) Only official representatives from Fortune Tobacco Corporation and DOH-BFAD will validate all winning raffle entries during the draws.

9.) All raffle prizes (1st to 6th prizes) and store/outlet winners will be published in national dailies within two (2) weeks after the grand draw date. For consolation prize winners of FTC cigarettes, a separate list will be posted at all district/branch offices of Fortune Tobacco Corporation nationwide.

10.) All prizes are tax paid, not convertible to cash, and can be redeemed within 60 days after the end of the promo period.

11.) Major prize winners will be notified by registered mail and/or by phone calls on when and where to claim their respective prizes.

12.) When claiming prizes, winners must present the registered mail and two (2) valid ID's bearing their photos and signatures. In case the claimant is unable to comply, he or she must execute an affidavit to verify and establish his or her identity.

13.) As for the store/outlet winners, they must also present the registered mail and two (2) valid IDs bearing their photos and signatures, and a copy of their business permit.

14.) Prizes not claimed sixty (60) days after the publication of the winners will be forfeited.

15.) All employees of Fortune Tobacco Corporation, its marketing arms, advertising agencies, and DOH-BFAD, as well as their relatives up to the 2nd degree of consanguinity are not eligible to join.

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Kenyans dominate Boston marathon

BOSTON—KENYA'S ROBERT CHERUIYOT SET a course record on the way to winning his second Boston Marathon on Monday, while compatriot Rita Jeptoo strode to victory in the women's race.

2003 champion Cheruiyot, facing the largest field of top US runners in more than two decades, pulled ahead in the latter stages to overtake fellow Kenyan Benjamin Maiyo and American Meb Keflezighi, lowering the course record by a second.

"I thought maybe I was going to slow down but I was very strong," Cheruiyot told a news conference after winning the $100,000 winner's prize and another $25,000 for setting the record.

It was the 14th time in the last 16 years that a Kenyan has won the world's oldest annually contested marathon.

The 27-year-old finished the 110th edition in an official time of two hours, seven minutes and 14 seconds, beating the previous record set by fellow Kenyan Cosmas Ndeti in 1994.

Kenya's Maiyo finished second in 2:08:21 and Keflezighi, who was born in Eritrea, third in 2:09:56. Americans Brian Sell finished in fourth place and Alan Culpepper in fifth.

In the women's field, Jeptoo overtook last year's New York City Marathon winner Jelena Prokopcuka of Latvia and Reiko Tosa of Japan who dominated the first half of the race.

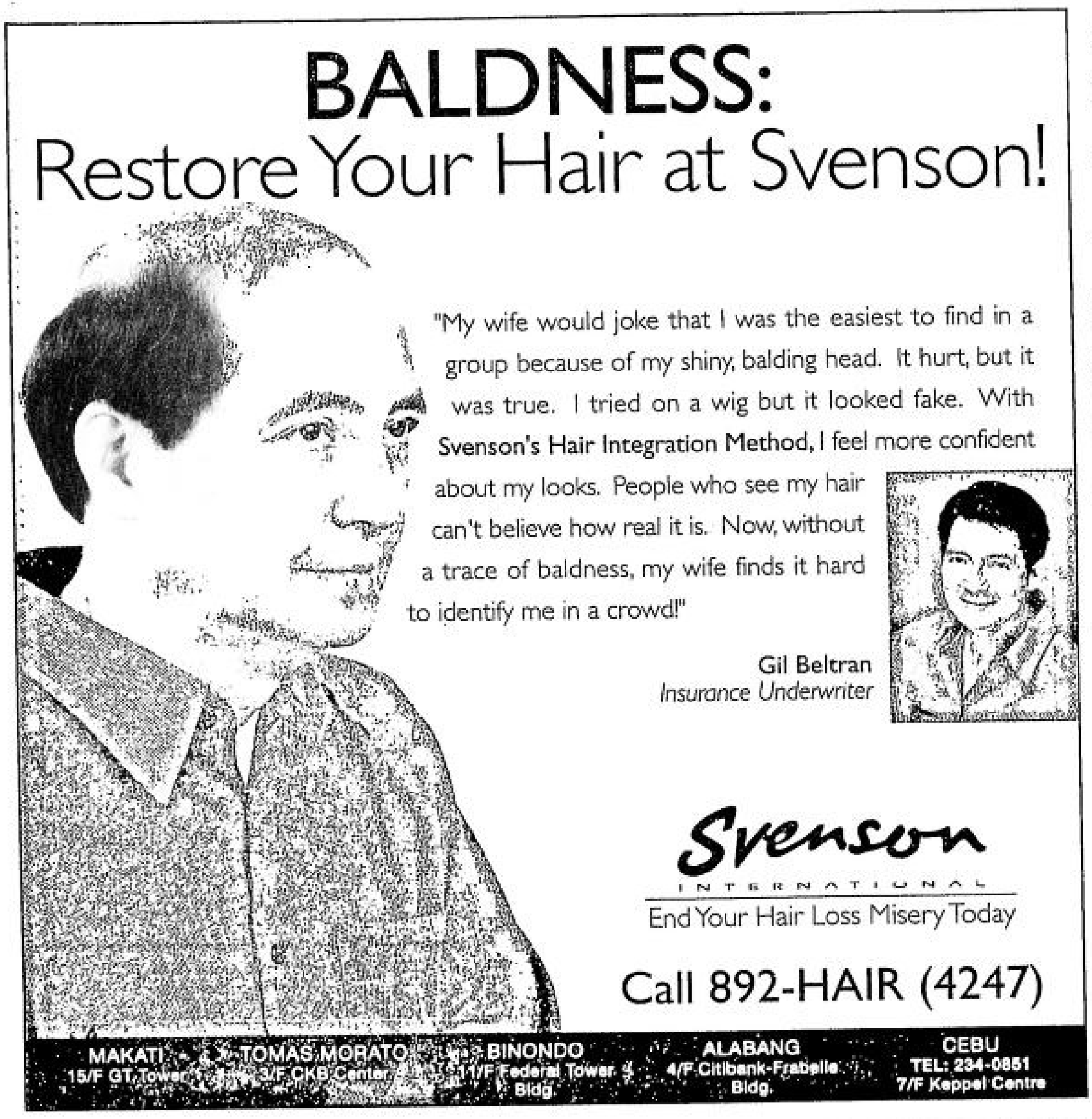
"I'm happy so much," said the 25-year-old Jeptoo, wearing her green wreath over tinted red hair wound in a bun.

Jeptoo, who won the women's race in her first attempt at a US marathon, clocked an official time of two hours, 23 minutes, 38 seconds, becoming third straight Kenyan woman to win the race.

Her time fell short of the women's course record of 2:20:43 set by Margaret Okayo of Kenya in 2002. *Reuters*

B.A.A. BOSTON MARATHON
8
B.A.A. BOSTON MARATHON
5

ROBERT Cheruiyot (top) and Rita Jeptoo completed a golden double for Kenya when they emerged triumphant in the 110th running of the Boston Marathon, the world's oldest marathon. AP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Spurs take West No. 1 seed

SAN ANTONIO—MANU GINOBILI scored 18 points and Tim Duncan added 16 to help the San Antonio Spurs beat the Utah Jazz 115-82 and clinch the Southwest Division title and the best record in the NBA's Western Conference on Monday.

The Spurs earned the No. 1 seed and homecourt advantage throughout the Western Conference playoffs.

"It's great to get (homecourt) wrapped up," Duncan said. "I'm feeling good right now—feeling healthy. I think we all feel pretty good right now, and that's the main thing."

San Antonio (62-19) took a 19-point lead into the fourth quarter and led by as many as 36 points, allowing the Spurs to rest their starters.

"Nobody is going to turn down homecourt," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said.

In other games, it was: Bulls 116, Magic 112; Bucks 113, Pistons 93; Cavaliers 93, Celtics 88; Bobcats 98, Knicks 91; Pacers 120, Raptors 95; Rockets 86, Nuggets 83; Warriors 93, Trail Blazers 79 and Suns 115, Hornets 78. *AP*

- **NBA on TV**

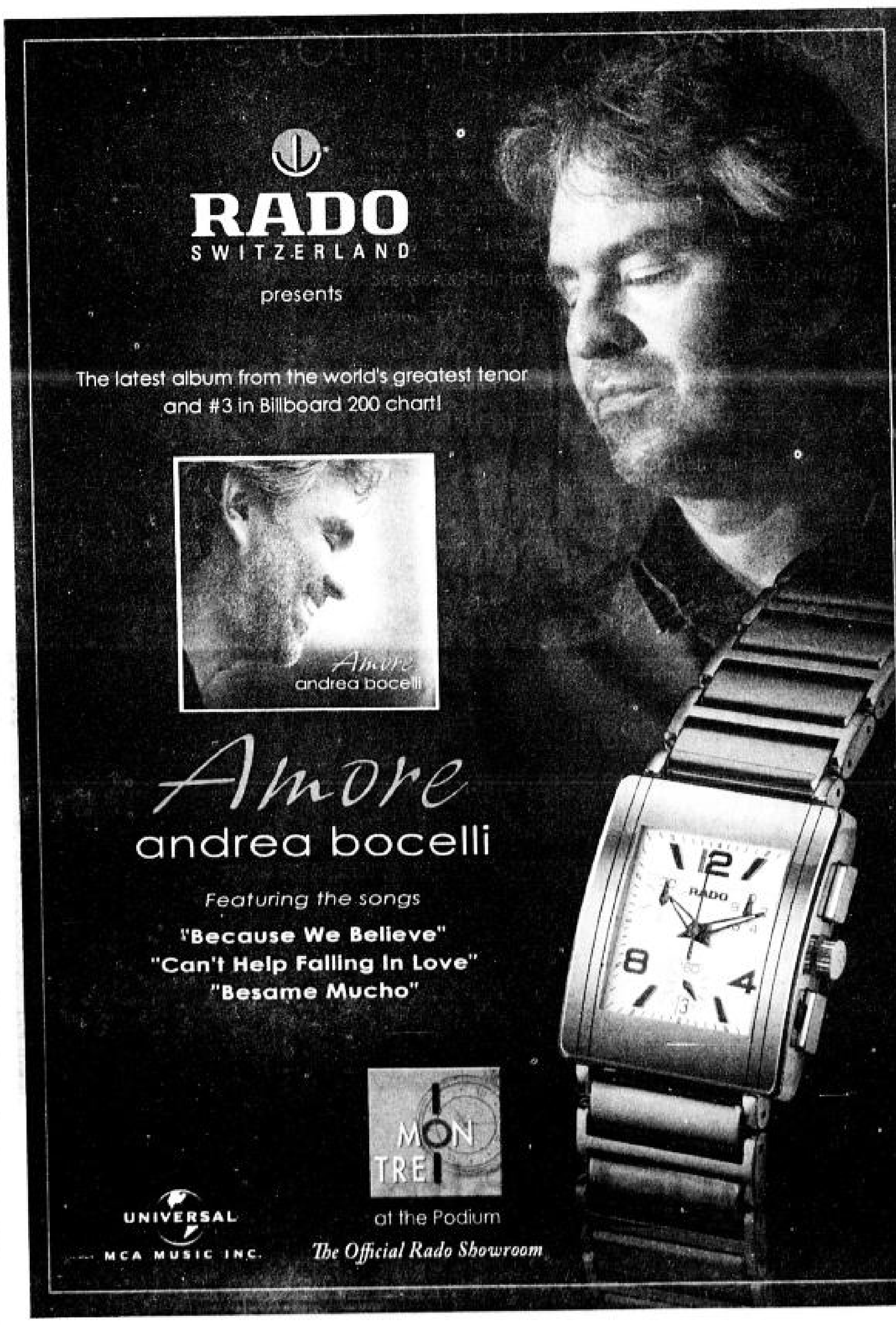
SOLAR SPORTS—Milwaukee vs. Washington (7 a.m. live, replay tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.)

SPORTSPLUS—Seattle vs. Sacramento (10 a.m. live, replay at 7 p.m.)

LA Clippers vs. Memphis (9:30 p.m. delayed telecast, replay tomorrow at 2:30 p.m.)

HORNETS
3
PHOENIX
13

SUNS guard Steve Nash (bottom) is helped off the floor by counterpart Chris Paul. REUTERS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Return to Guam

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

NEXT MONTH, MAY 26 TO BE EXACT, Ginebra San Miguel will play a regular PBA game against Alaska in Guam.

This comes as a bit of a surprise to me because to my knowledge, no basketball team from the Philippines has been invited to play in this American territory in the past years.

It seems that the Pinoys in Guam simply lost interest in Filipino basketball action, probably because they've already had too much of it. There was a time when just about every cage squad in the Philippines, amateur or professional, popular or obscure, was invited to play in the Micronesian island—all expenses paid.

In fact, many of the cagers had stayed behind to marry and establish permanent residence there.

* * *

The last time the PBA went to Guam was 10 years ago in 1996. It was the third PBA delegation invited by promoter Paul Shimizu, managing director of Shimbros Productions and it was, by far the biggest. Four teams were sent to Guam to play a doubleheader.

"Welcome to Guam, the island of three B's: Beaches, Breezes and Budweiser."

This was the famous line delivered by Lambert Ramos with a toothsome smile to new arrivals from the Philippines. Lambert is country manager for Budweiser in Guam. He was the conduit between Shimbros and the PBA. Budweiser had sponsored all the PBA events in Guam.

In terms of interest and attendance, the games were a huge success within the Filipino community, albeit a financial fiasco for the promoter.

* * *

"Shimbros always lost money substantially in these endeavors," Lambert disclosed. "Fortunately, Budweiser was always there to shoulder the loss."

Big delegation, five-star accommodation and first-class meals plus dollar allowances for all—how could have Paul defrayed his expenses? But being a kind and generous man, he must have gotten his reward from the joy he gave Filipinos there. Lambert, for one, has become so close to the Shimizus, they consider each other family.

Shortly after the last PBA event however, an intensity 8.2 earthquake shook the very roots of the small island, unnerving its inhabitants, including Lambert and his family.

"At the time of the earthquake, I was on the 10th floor of a tall building. It was swaying to and fro. *Dinuduyan kami*," Lambert recalls.

The following day, the Ramoses held a family council. It was decided that they would return to Manila ASAP. He soon joined Fred Uytengsu's General Milling Corp. as a marketing executive.

* * *

A few months ago, Lambert went on a business trip to Guam, and of course went to see the Shimizus.

He was very surprised when Paul once again discussed the PBA, even going as far as telling him that should the opportunity arise, he would be interested in staging a regular PBA game there.

"Just let me know," were Paul's closing words to Lambert, who immediately touched base with Alaska's Joaqui Trillo as soon as he returned to Manila. A meeting with PBA commissioner Noli Eala was set.

"The Filipino-Americans in Guam are also eager to see the Fil-Am cagers. It will be just like old times," Lambert said, as he recalled one memorable evening at the poolside of Guam Hilton, where the PBA delegation was billeted in its last trip to the island.

Truly it was a magical evening. We were lucky to catch the Stylistics in concert at the Hilton poolside, where everyone watched the show free of charge.

I can still feel the breeze, see the stars, hear the enchanting melody and taste the ever-flowing Bud. It was a time when I could still afford to be decadent.

* * *

HOOPVINE: Tried to get in touch with BAP president Joey Lina to find out if, as he hoped, the Holy Week would allow him to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Didn't get an answer though. Joey said he was in Hong Kong... After 19 days of detention at the Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan and confinement at the Metropolitan Hospital in Tondo, BAP secretary general Graham Lim has been released... At about 11 p.m. last Sunday, Ruben Baltero of dzME called to report a vehicular accident along 15th avenue in Cubao involving a passenger jeepney and a Ford Expedition owned by Air21 cager Mark Telan, who came from the Araneta Coliseum. According to Ruben, the front of Mark's car was smashed, but the jeep was hardly damaged. No one was hurt.

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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RP 'Idol' tryouts on

LAYING the groundwork: Perci Intalan, Ryan Cayabyab, Sheldon Bailey and Robert V. Barreiro

Big-name celebs among 38 in first two auditions for hosts, judges

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

PHILIPPINE IDOL' IS LOOKing for a few good men and women.

"We are taking pains in screening judges and hosts for the show," said Perci Intalan, vice president for Creative and Entertainment Production of ABC 5, which acquired the franchise for the world-famous reality talent search from FremantleMedia.

In the two of three audition days that ABC earlier set, over three dozen local celebrities have tried out so far—among them topnotch singers, artist managers and discoverers, TV directors and record producers for the two remaining slots for judges. (Composer and music teacher Ryan Cayabyab is the only juror handpicked by the producers.)

Emcees, models, deejays, veejays and established TV personalities are after the two slots for hosts.

Third and last

Third round of auditions is set this week.

At press time, Intalan told INQUIRER Entertainment, 23 have auditioned for hosts and 15 for judges. "I am so impressed because even big stars have no qualms about auditioning," he said.

Added Terra Daffon, ABC 5 senior vice president for Corporate Affairs, "We are eyeing a tandem for the hosts, just like on 'American Idol.'" In the first season of "AI," Ryan Seacrest shared hosting chores with actor-comedian Brian Dunkleman.

Should be smart

"The hosts don't need to be big names," Daffon pointed out. "Presenters can be virtual unknowns, as long as they are talented and smart enough to think on their feet. Just like Seacrest, who was a radio talent before 'AI.' "

As for the judges, Intalan said, the producers want people who are "articulate and credible," as specified in the "Idol" manual, which all franchisees are obligated to follow.

Cayabyab met with Sheldon Bailey, con

RP 'IDOL'/ A2-2

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Pamahiin

Stars Dennis Trillo, Paolo Contis, Iya Villania, Marian Rivera, Jaclyn Jose, Vangie Labalan

Directed by Rahyan Carlos

A *balikbayan* (Trillo) returns to his hometown after 15 years to attend the funeral of his best friend (Contis) who has committed suicide. His refusal to heed local superstitions sparks a series of eerie and inexplicable events. He digs deeper into the mystery with the aid of his girlfriend (Villania), a clairvoyant who is haunted by disturbed spirits. According to its drumbeaters, this screamfest boasts "cutting-edge special effects" from Ignite Media. Producer Roselle Monteverde-Teo relates that shooting was disrupted by several bizarre occurrences. "It was because we had failed to offer prayers in the abandoned house, our main setting," explains Teo, whose concept serves as the inspiration of the script co-written by Andrew Paredes and director Carlos. The filmmaker also offers his own share of baffling experiences. "On the set, lights would suddenly turn off. Or the video playback would rewind by itself. Iya and I also got locked in a room. I normally don't get scared but the presence in the house was truly frightening."

RP 'Idol' tryouts on

From page A2-1

sulting producer to "Philippine Idol," when the British TV executive was in Manila recently.

"I was delighted to meet him," Bailey said of Cayabyab. "He is passionate about music. Not only does he possess the technical expertise, he cares about the contestants and wants them to improve."

As FremantleMedia's "flying producer," Bailey travels to different countries that air "Idol" shows.

"In production meetings abroad, I always instruct the local producers not to look for a Simon Cowell," Bailey explained.

Cowell has made a name for himself as the notoriously nasty judge on both the original "Pop Idol" in the United Kingdom and its successful spin-off "American Idol" in the United States.

"In its first season, Cowell sent shock waves in the US," Bailey recalled, but cautioned that "the Cowell template may not work across countries and cultures."

She advised that "local franchisees should look for people that would click in their countries."

Doesn't work

Bailey elaborated: "When someone tries to be a Simon Cowell, it doesn't work. It looks fake. They end up being rude even when it's not relevant. They imitate Cowell because they only want to be popular."

That's a no-no, she stressed, because "On 'Idol,' the stars are the contestants, not the judges."

"Credibility" is the cornerstone of the "Idol" show, Bailey said, and judges should strike a healthy balance between being supportive and being honest.

"In the beginning, Paula Abdul [of "AI"] seemed to have difficulty with that," Bailey observed. "Later on, she learned and adjusted [because the audience demanded it]."

Originally, she said, "AI" had four judges, but New York hip-hop radio deejay Angie Martinez resigned because she had found it difficult to criticize contestants. "We really want the kids to develop. One way to do that is with no-holds-barred, constructive criticism. We want the hosts and judges to remain true to themselves."

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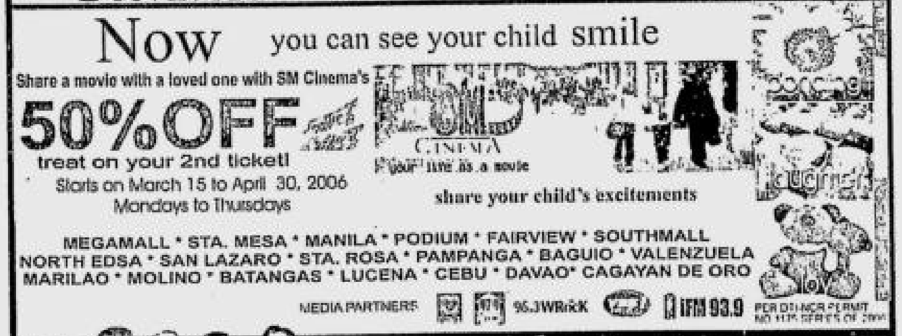

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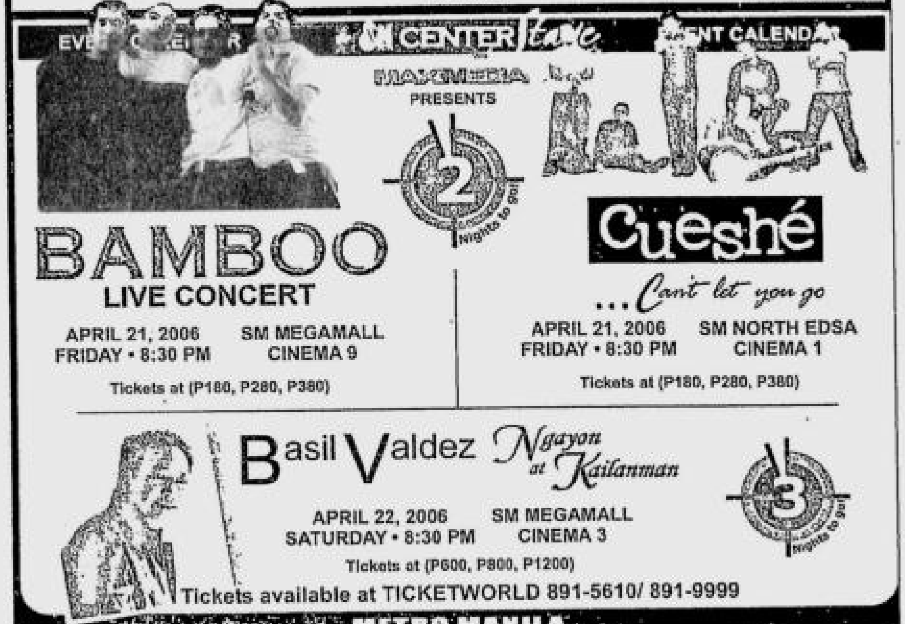

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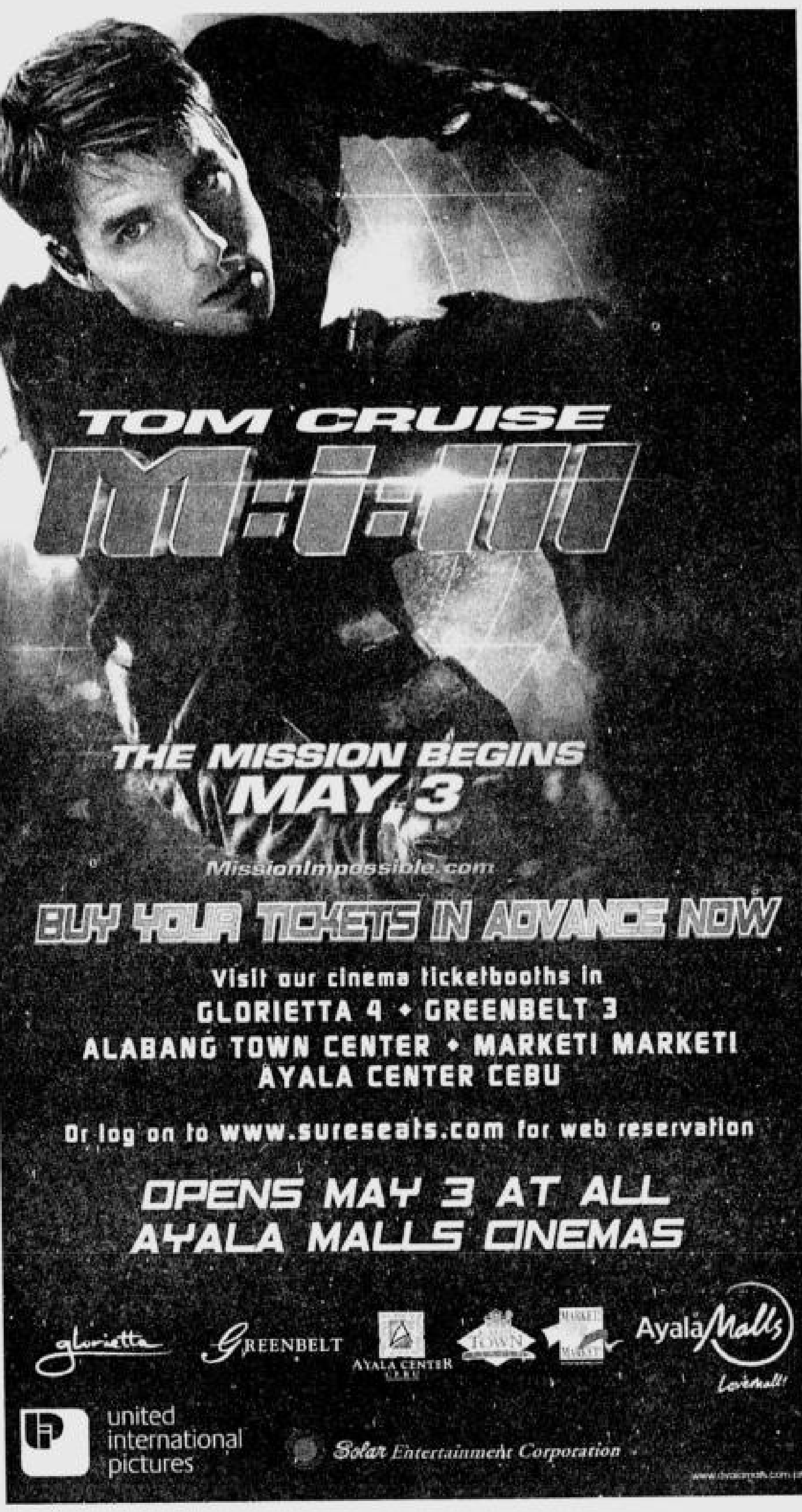

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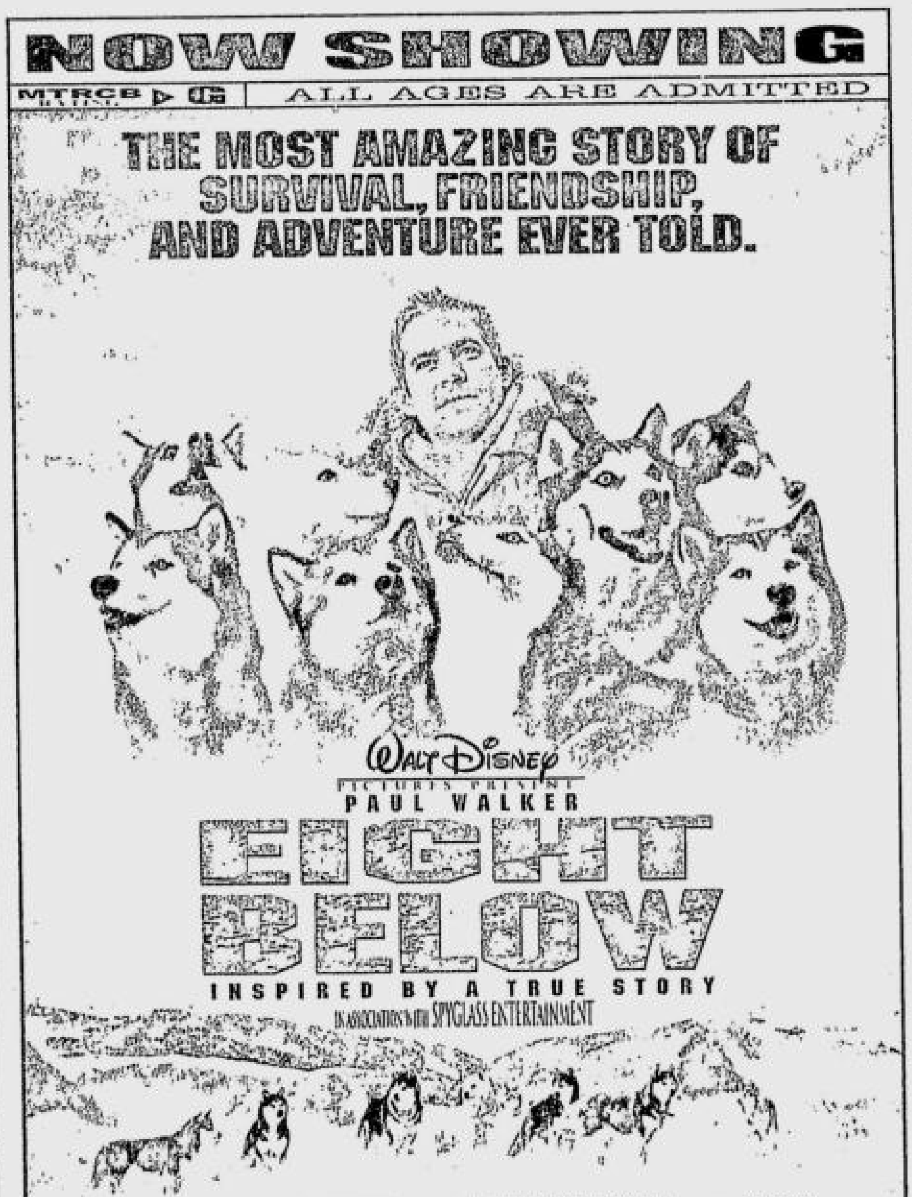

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Why, thanks

From Mystica (mystica_cassidy@yahoo.com mailto:mystica_cassidy@yahoo.com) Quezon City:

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Bad trip

From Edna Estillore (jhanellah05@yahoo.com) Landmass Commercial Park

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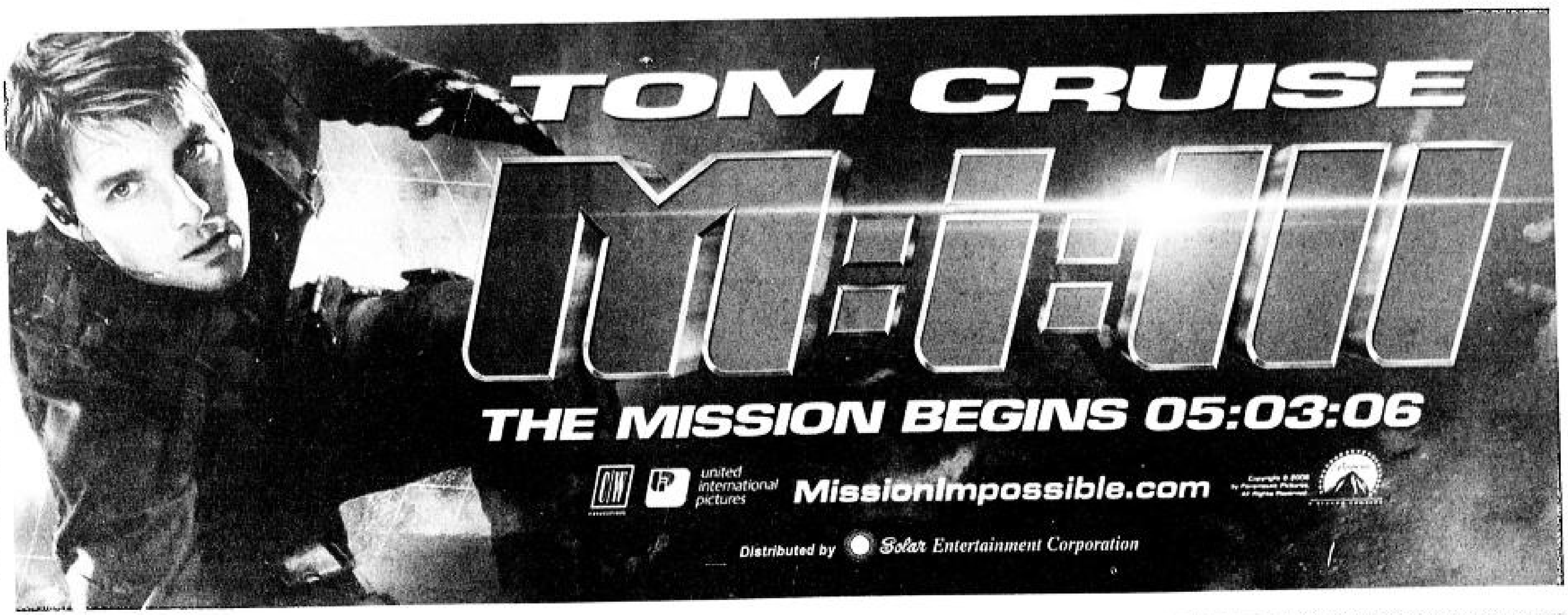
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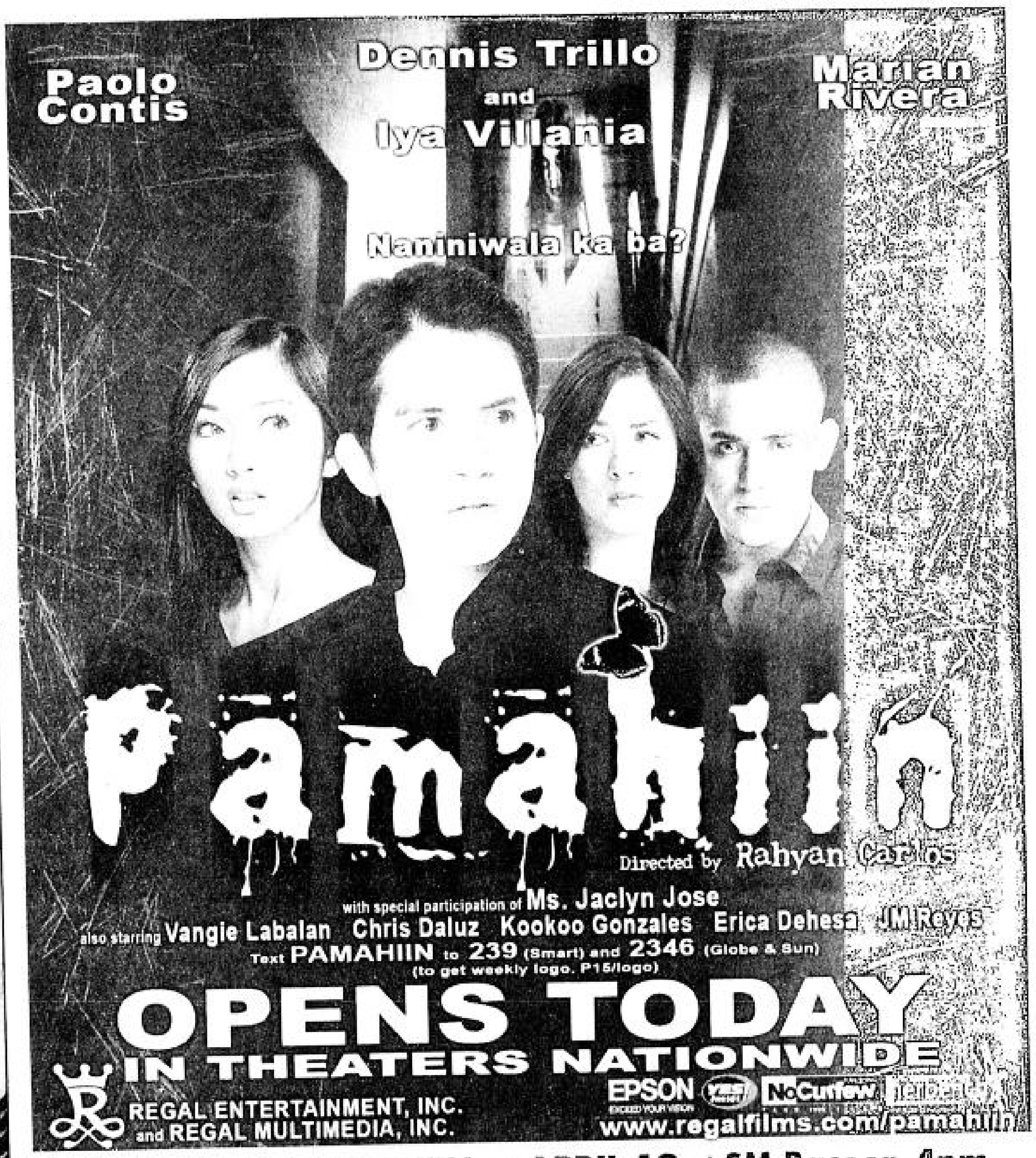
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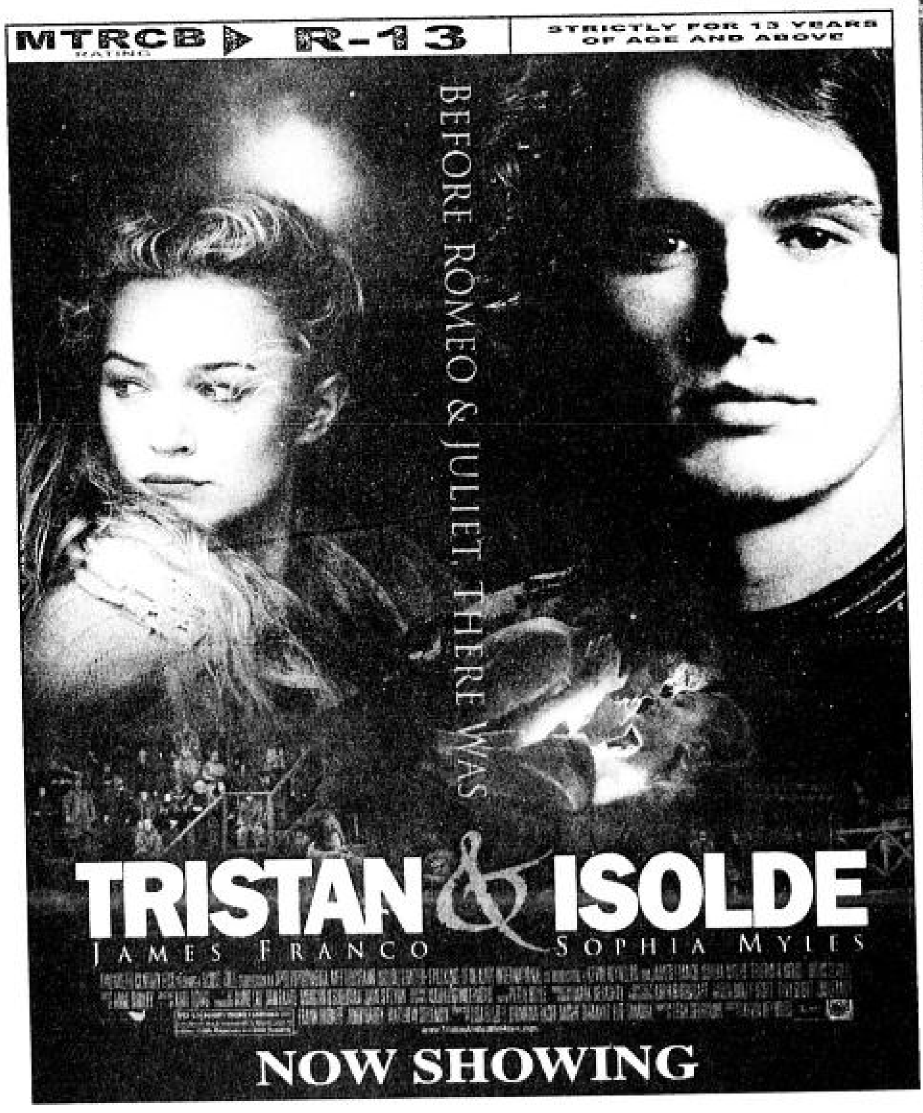
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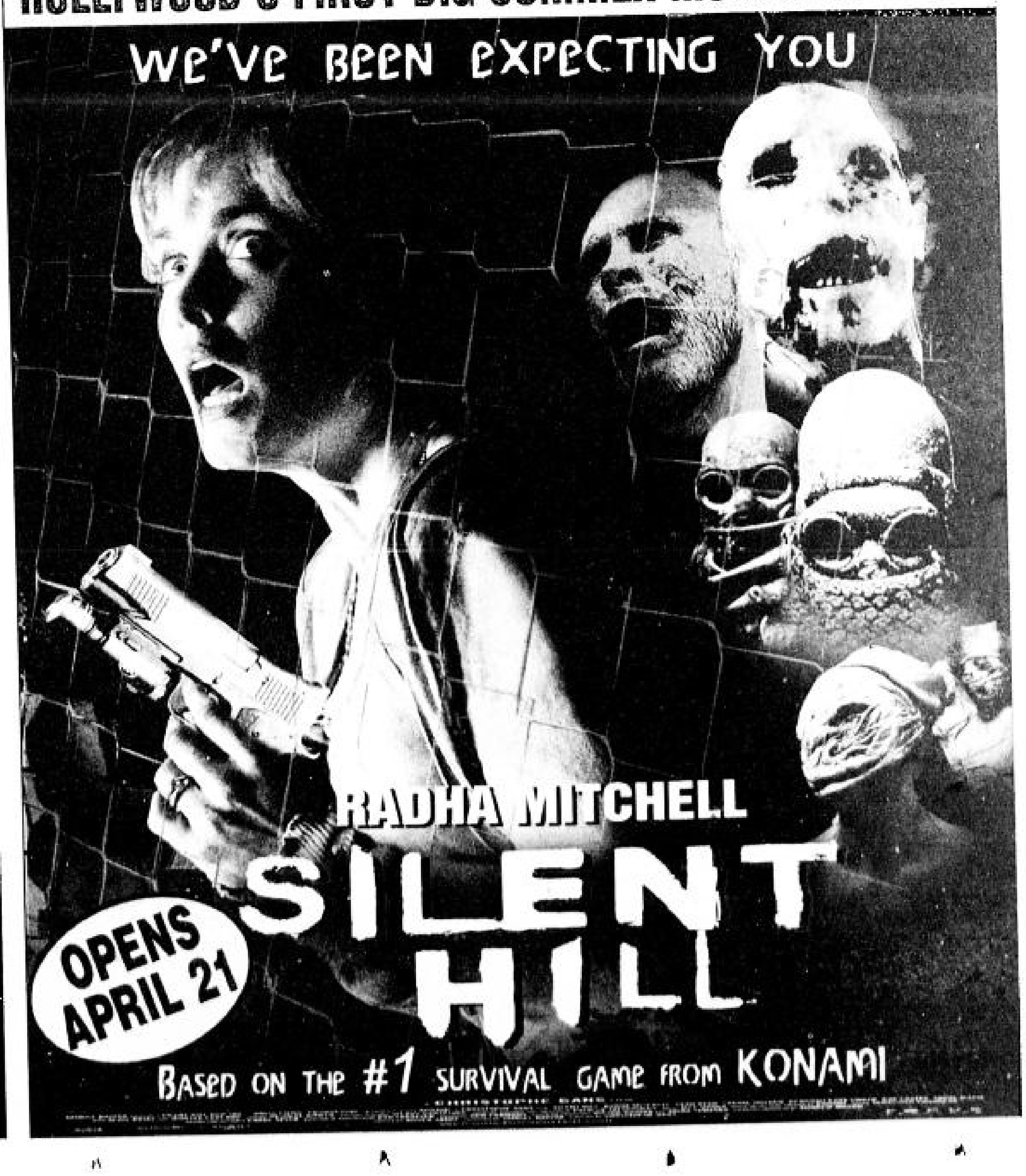
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Based on the #1 survival game from KONAMI

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

MOVIEWORLD

CINEMA ACCESS 635-5555 FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA 632-[illegible]

1 ICE AGE 2 • THX
2 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
3 SUBMERGED
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 PAMAHIIN
6 EIGHT BELOW
7 D' LUCKY ONES
8 AMERICAN SOLDIER
9 BANDIDAS
10 BASIC INSTINCT 2

ERMITA 636-7809 to 12

1 PAMAHIIN
2 ICE AGE 2
AMERICAN SOLDIER
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 THE COOLER
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
6 SUBMERGED
7 EIGHT BELOW

METRO EAST 682-8183 / 682-8199

1 ICE AGE 2
2 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 AMERICAN SOLDIER
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
6 EIGHT BELOW
7 D' LUCKY ONES
8 PAMAHIIN

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 PAMAHIIN
2 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
5 EIGHT BELOW
6 D' LUCKY ONES

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2576

1 PAMAHIIN
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 PAMAHIIN
2 EIGHT BELOW
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 D' LUCKY ONES

Summer Movie Treat
BEAT the HEAT at the MOVIES
2 movie tickets for the price of 1
APRIL 16 to MAY 16
ANY MOVIE
Mondays thru Fridays
(except Wednesdays)
Participating Branches:
Novaliches, Dasmariñas, Imus, Sta. Rosa, San Fernando, Pampanga and Iloilo
the coolest thing this Summer!
See Posters and Flyers for details
Per DTI-NCR permit no. 2101 series of 2006

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0007

1 PAMAHIIN
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

LIPA (043) [illegible] / (043) 312-5870

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
3 PAMAHIIN
4 D' LUCKY ONES
5 EIGHT BELOW

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 / (046) 416-4332

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 PAMAHIIN
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 PAMAHIIN
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 EIGHT BELOW

IMUS (046) 875-3838 / (046) 471-8188

1 PAMAHIIN
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 / (045) 961-6270

1 JUST FRIENDS
2 PAMAHIIN
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
6 BASIC INSTINCT 2

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 / (034) 441-0459

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 PAMAHIIN
4 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
5 HOUSE OF FURY

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 PAMAHIIN
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
5 EIGHT BELOW

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A Pre Paid Movie Pass to the Hottest Seats in town.
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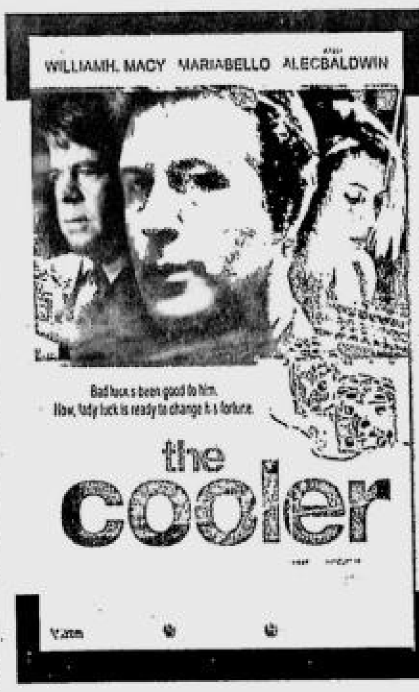
For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15


WILLIAM H. MACY MARIA BELLO ALEC BALDWIN
Bad luck's been good to him. Now, lady luck is ready to change his fortune.
the cooler

Exclusive

The Cooler: 12 nominations, 6 awards from various international award-giving bodies

Bernie Lootz (Macy) is the unluckiest man in Las Vegas. His bad luck is contagious. Wanting to knock out their highest rollers, The Shangri_la Hotel and Casino, one of the last mob-run casinos in town, decides to use Bernie as a "Cooler" to reverse their lucky streaks. The scheme goes well until Bernie falls in love with a cocktail waitress, Natalie (Bello), who becomes his 'lady luck' much to the alarm of the casino's crooked director (Baldwin), who is dead set on putting an end to the romance and Bernie's new-found luck.

Robinsons Movieworld
ERMITA
Opens *april 19*

Subject for MTRCB Rating

SCREENING

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangri-la Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2 *GP*
2 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW *GP*
3 (DOLBY) SUBMERGED *R13*
4 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE *R13*

PREMIERE
(DOLBY) KIDDIE FILM FEST

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS) AMERICAN SOLDIERS
2 (SDDS) BASIC INSTINCT 2
3 (DTS) ICE AGE 2
4 GOLD (DTS) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) SUBMERGED
6 GOLD (SDDS) EIGHT BELOW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) NANNY MCPHEE
8 [illegible] MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 [illegible] THE HILLS HAVE EYES
10 [illegible] D' LUCKY ONES

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
3 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
4 (DOLBY) SUBMERGED

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 ICE AGE 2

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
2 (DOLBY) D' LUCKY ONES
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 SUBMERGED
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 AMERICAN SOLDIERS

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 (DTS) MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
4 ICE AGE 2

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
3 (DTS) BASIC INSTINCT
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 (DOLBY) MOMENTS OF LOVE

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 ICE AGE 2
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 (DOLBY) MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 (DTS) D' LUCKY ONES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 ICE AGE-2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) D' LUCKY ONES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 NANNY MC PHEE
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE

starmall
EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

3 AMERICAN SOLDIERS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) EIGHT BELOW
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA (MEGATRADE)
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 16 BLOCKS
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 RESERVED

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994

1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 VENOM
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 D' LUCKY ONES

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 BANDIDAS
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 NANNY MCPHEE

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Corporation
Telephone No. (044) 600-3026

1 NANNY MCPHEE
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 D' LUCKY ONES

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX) EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 (DTS EX) D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-6271

MOMENTS OF LOVE
D' LUCKY ONES
RESERVED
RESERVED

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
2 ICE AGE 2

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS) JUST FRIENDS
2 MURDER
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2
4 (DTS)

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
2 NENE INDSENTE
3 (DTS) D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 ULTRAVIOLET

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 BIG MOMMAS HOUSE 2
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 MURDER
2 BANDIDAS

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Blanca Gomez ...

From page A2-7

she reminisced. "I spoke to them in Visayan and Filipino. I served rice and Filipino dishes at home. My youngest is already 22, but he still lives with me!"

When her kids reached their teens, she practically accompanied them to discos. "While waiting for their midnight curfew, I hang around outside the club. I merely wanted to make sure that they were safe. It was hard because I had three teenaged girls."

Now, she is following the same Pinoy parenting style with her five grandkids—Nicolas, Anisa, Nikki, Marcus and Ariana.

"All of my grandkids eat rice," she said, with a smile. "My grandson loves dipping fried fish in vinegar with *sili*."

She also watches Filipino TV shows with her family in LA. "My grandkids would often say: 'There's grandma again [watching] 'Saksi' and 'Eat... Bulaga!'"

12 out of 30,000 picked ...

From page A2-8

discover fresh talent. Most of the teen housemates, he said, have expressed their desire to go into show biz.

Last week before the nation settled into a long weekend, Dyogi had come up with a short list of possible housemates. As usual, their identities are a tightly guarded secret, to be revealed only on April 23 when the show kicks off on ABS-CBN.

This much Dyogi revealed: eight of the teen housemates are from Luzon and Metro Manila, one is from Cebu, and three are from the Visayas.

The show will run until June 3.

Two evictions will be held each week starting May 13.

Toni Gonzaga will no longer host the show. Replacing Toni is Mariel Rodriguez. Ex-celebrity housemate Bianca Gonzales will be doing the "Updates" and "Uplates" teasers.

Prizes for the top teen housemate have not been finalized, Dyogi said, as more brands and products are vying for sponsorships in ABS-CBN's current hit.

Bucky bids bye to 'AI'

From page A2-8

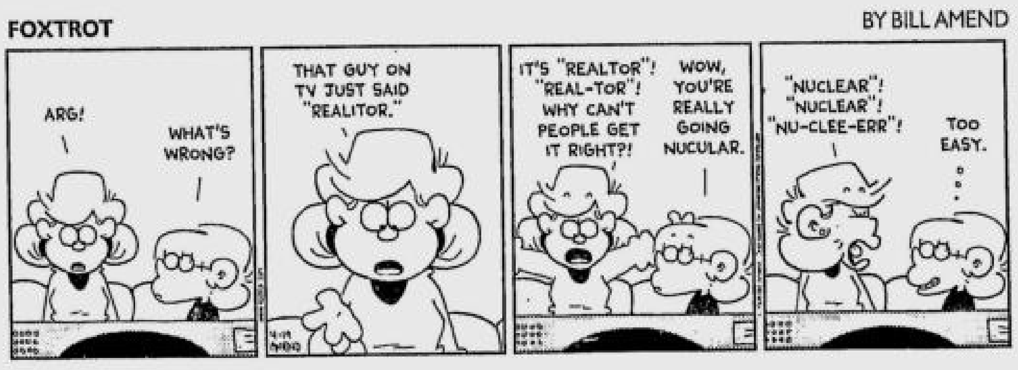
enunciate your words more clearly." How did you feel about that?

It's something I need to work on. If it's anything to make me better, I'm game for it.

Catch "American Idol" on Star World today and tomorrow at 5:00 p.m. direct satellite, 8:00 p.m. primetime and 11:30 p.m. replay.

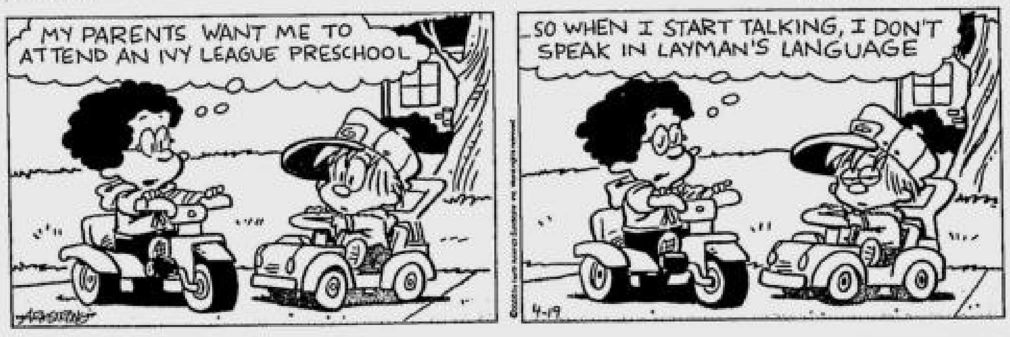
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


ARG!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THAT GUY ON TV JUST SAID "REALITOR."
IT'S "REALTOR"! "REAL-TOR"! WHY CAN'T PEOPLE GET IT RIGHT?!
WOW, YOU'RE REALLY GOING NUCULAR.
"NUCLEAR"! "NUCLEAR"! "NU-CLEE-ERR"!
TOO EASY.
4-19

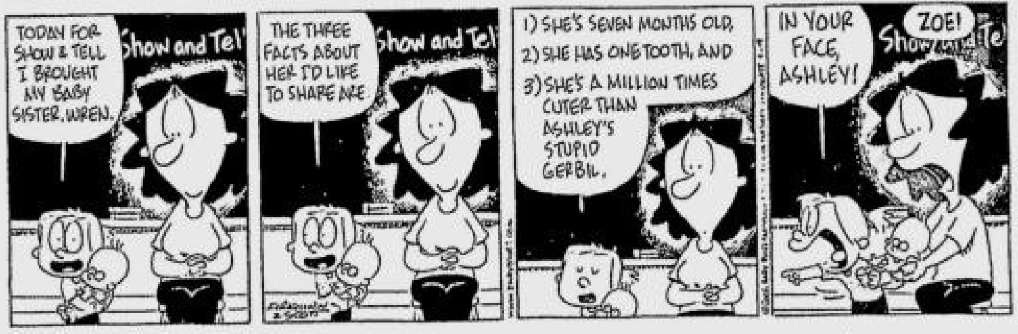
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


MY PARENTS WANT ME TO ATTEND AN IVY LEAGUE PRESCHOOL
SO WHEN I START TALKING, I DON'T SPEAK IN LAYMAN'S LANGUAGE
4-19

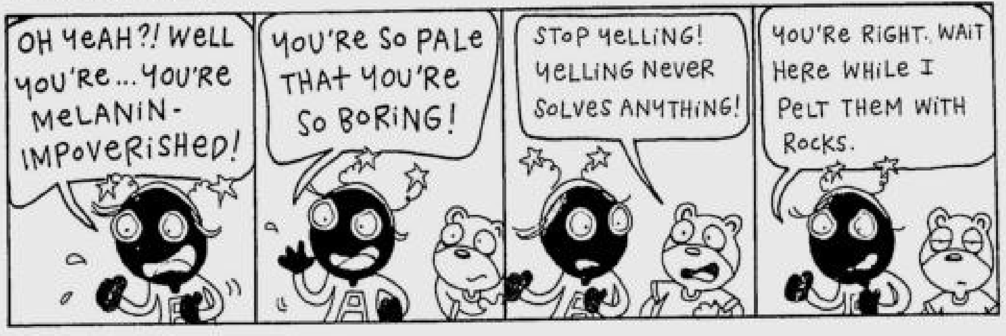
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


TODAY FOR SHOW & TELL I BROUGHT MY BABY SISTER, WREN.
Show and Tell
THE THREE FACTS ABOUT HER I'D LIKE TO SHARE ARE
1) SHE'S SEVEN MONTHS OLD, 2) SHE HAS ONE TOOTH, AND 3) SHE'S A MILLION TIMES CUTER THAN ASHLEY'S STUPID GERBIL.
IN YOUR FACE, ASHLEY!
ZOE!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


OH YEAH?! WELL YOU'RE... YOU'RE MELANIN-IMPOVERISHED!
YOU'RE SO PALE THAT YOU'RE SO BORING!
STOP YELLING! YELLING NEVER SOLVES ANYTHING!
YOU'RE RIGHT. WAIT HERE WHILE I PELT THEM WITH ROCKS.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have lots of enthusiasm for life. You're an excellent communicator. Because you're competitive and hard-working, it's important for you to reach the success you want. You're assertive, mentally sharp and a strong beginner. You initiate things. Your ideas sometimes lead to big money! Work hard this year to build and construct something important. Your payoff will come in 2007.

Birthdate of: Luis Miguel Basteri, singer; Ashley Judd, actress; Tim Curry, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Make vacation plans or long-term arrangements for the education of children. You might also want to plan how you can explore creative hobbies (i.e., what you need to buy, etc.).

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Tackle routine work that requires research, concentration and attention to detail. You will do very well at this kind of task today. (Your mind is ready for this sort of thing.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Listen to wise advice from someone older and more experienced. After all, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Why not learn from the mistakes of others? (It's easier and cheaper!)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Discussions with bosses, parents and VIPs are fruitful and productive today. People are really impressed with what you have to say. You speak with wisdom and foresight. (Impressive.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Travel plans are exciting. Now is the time to settle the deal. Commit to a future trip somewhere or perhaps future educational opportunities. You might also make long-term plans connected with publishing.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Settle disagreements about shared property, inheritances and estates today. You might also want to finalize details relating to insurance matters.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Discussions with partners are serious and sober but practical and useful. Take time to hear what someone has to say to you. You'll have your chance to speak.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're willing to work hard at rather routine, dull work today. Capitalize on this influence. Get as much done as you can, because your powers of concentration are excellent!

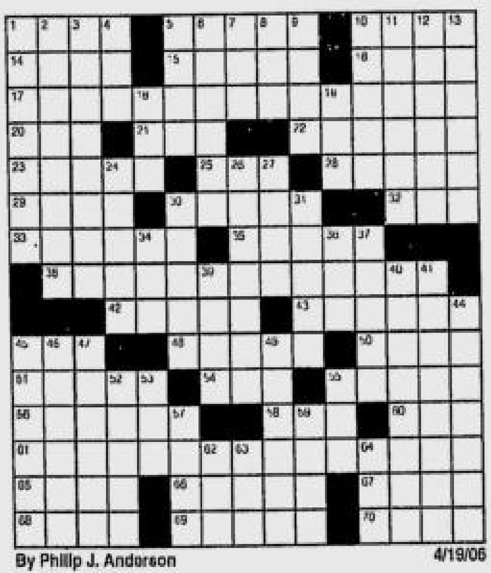
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might receive wise advice from someone about financial speculation today. Similarly, you might be advised about professional sports and dealing with children.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You'll be very efficient tackling home repairs or fixing what is broken today. Family discussions about someone's long-term security will be productive.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You're very serious-minded today. You won't waste time on frivolous things. You want to discuss what is important; you need to plan for the future.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You feel financially frugal today. If you spend money, it will be for something practical and long lasting. You want to get good value for your hard-earned dollar.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

ACROSS
1 Industrial pollutants: abbr.
5 "Butterfield 8" author
10 Speedy
14 Goofs
15 More docile
16 Debate side
17 Way to go back and forth
20 Amusement
21 Negative link
22 "__ Dallas"
23 "Martha" or "Norma"
25 Uganda's Amin
28 "Skittle Players" painter
29 Religious custom
30 River through Grenoble
32 Air-leak sound
33 Taxi devices
35 Aquarium bottom-feeder
38 Way to go in and out
42 Arab leader: var.
43 Flexible
45 Half a dance?
48 Banal
50 Model Macpherson
51 Stoppages
54 "Cheers" setting
55 Snooped
56 Bowers
58 Night before
60 Long-snouted fish
61 Way to go up and down
65 Bivouac shelter
66 Lessen
67 Calais summers
68 God of love
69 Player and Oldman
70 Fewer

DOWN
1 Carry out
2 Roulette employee
3 Dark-haired woman
4 9-digit ID
5 Milanese eight
6 Tweed type
7 French friend
8 Agt.
9 Liberal or fine follower
10 Gem surface
11 Low joints
12 Inscribed stone markers
13 Mythological giants
18 O.J. trial letters
19 Part of TGIF
24 "Still Me" writer
26 Disturbed mental states
27 Household press
30 Map dot
31 Three on a par five
34 CD-__
36 Livy's 401
37 Four-bagger
39 Action word
40 Bird
41 Lets go of
44 Set right
45 Unsullied
46 Valerie or Tess
47 Unpigmented
49 Formal agreement
52 Legal wrongs
53 Sp. lady
55 Miles/hour connector
57 Metal waste
59 Contends
62 Mom-&-pop store grp.
63 Black goo
64 Animation frame

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	C	A	N		F	A	V	A		B	U	N	D	T
T	A	C	T		I	S	I	S		O	P	E	R	A
O	N	T	H	I	N	I	C	E		O	T	T	E	R
R	O	U	S	T		D	E	A	R	T	H			
E	V	A		E	W	E	S		E	L	E	C	T	S
S	A	L	O	M	E			J	O	E	C	O	O	L
			U	S	A	B	L	E		G	R	O	P	E
A	L	I	T		R	A	Y	E	D		E	K	E	D
C	A	R	O	B		R	E	P	O	S	E			
E	M	A	N	A	T	E			L	A	K	E	R	S
D	E	N	A	L	I		D	O	L	L		A	O	L
			L	O	N	D	O	N		S	E	R	T	A
C	U	M	I	N		I	N	A	B	A	D	W	A	Y
A	N	I	M	E		E	Z	I	O		N	I	T	E
B	I	X	B	Y		T	O	R	Y		A	G	E	R

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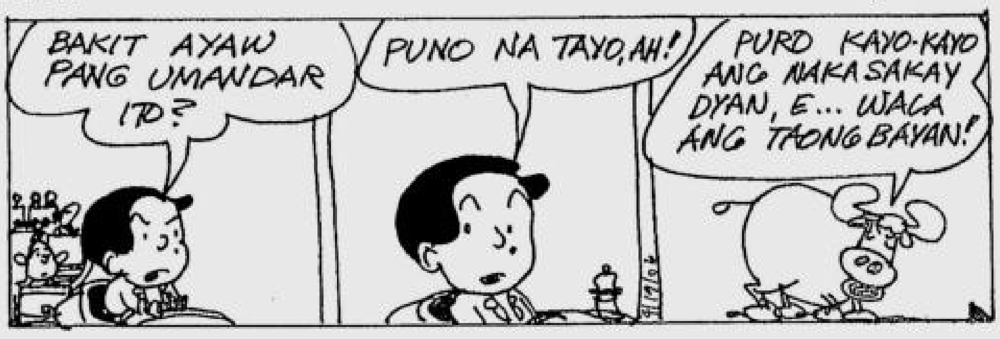
4/19/06

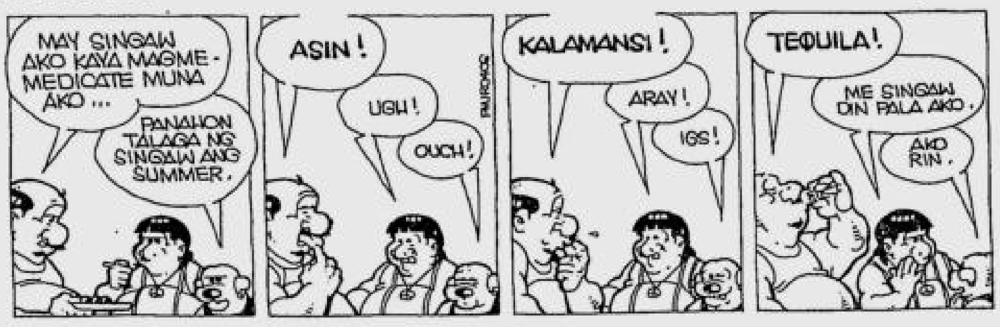
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT AYAW PANG UMANDAR ITO?
PUNO NA TAYO, AH!
PURO KAYO-KAYO ANG NAKASAKAY DYAN, E... WALA ANG TAONG BAYAN!

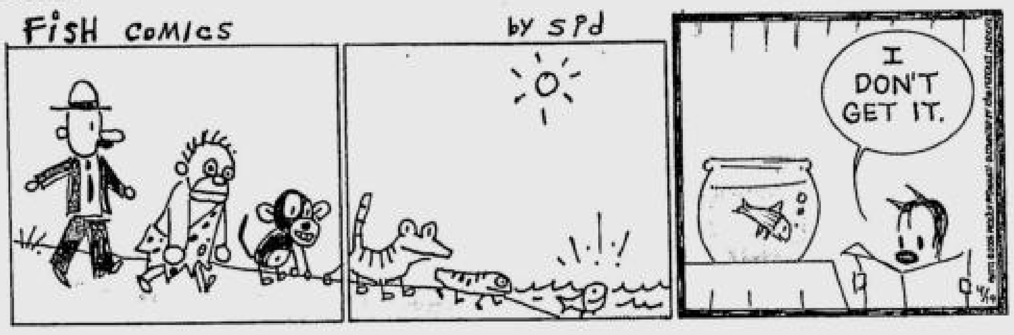
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAY SINGAW AKO KAYA MAGME-MEDICATE MUNA AKO...
PANAHON TALAGA NG SINGAW ANG SUMMER.
ASIN!
UGH!
OUCH!
KALAMANSI!
ARAY!
IGS!
TEQUILA!
ME SINGAW DIN PALA AKO.
AKO RIN.

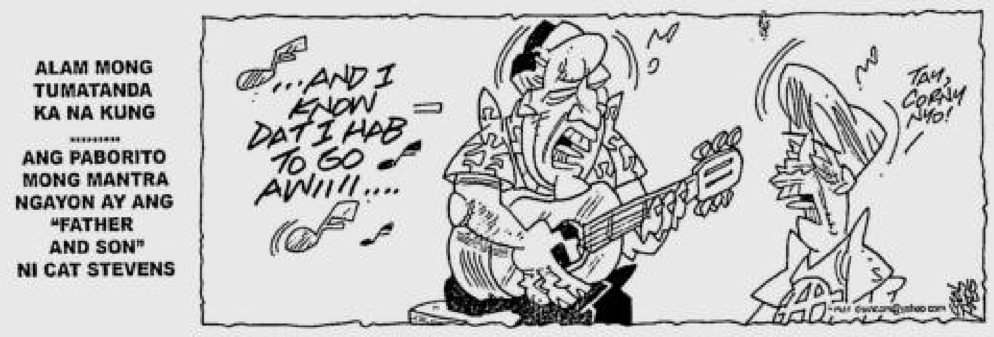
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


FISH COMICS
by SPd
I DON'T GET IT.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS

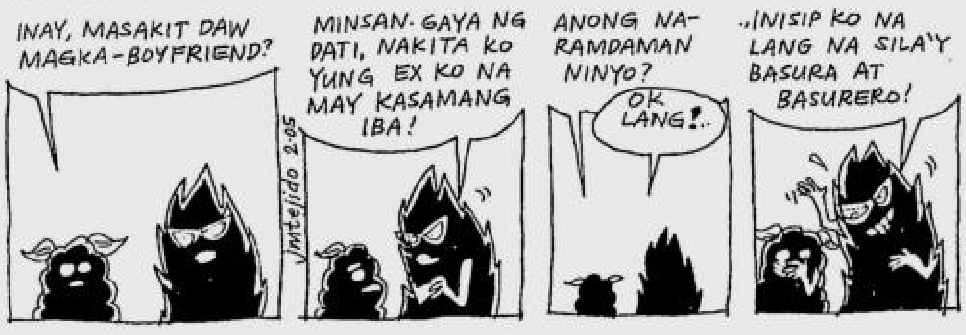


ALAM MONG TUMATANDA KA NA KUNG
....
ANG PABORITO MONG MANTRA NGAYON AY ANG "FATHER AND SON" NI CAT STEVENS

...AND I KNOW DAT I HAB TO GO AWI!!!....
TAY, CORNY NYO!

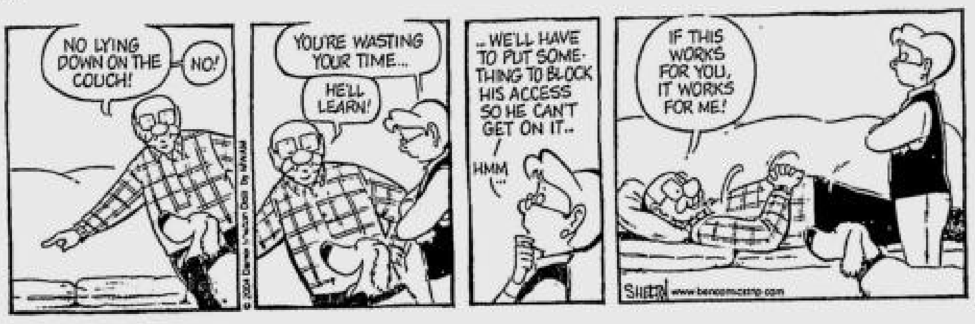
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


INAY, MASAKIT DAW MAGKA-BOYFRIEND?
MINSAN. GAYA NG DATI, NAKITA KO YUNG EX KO NA MAY KASAMANG IBA!
ANONG NARAMDAMAN NINYO?
OK LANG!..
..INISIP KO NA LANG NA SILA'Y BASURA AT BASURERO!
tejido 2-05

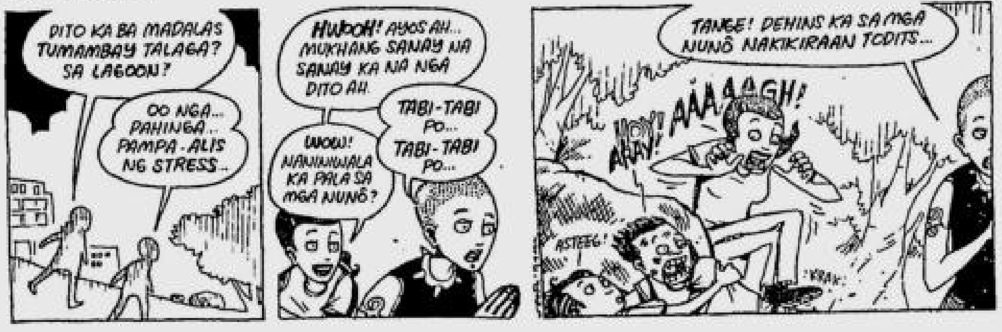
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


NO LYING DOWN ON THE COUCH!
NO!
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME...
HE'LL LEARN!
..WE'LL HAVE TO PUT SOMETHING TO BLOCK HIS ACCESS SO HE CAN'T GET ON IT..
HMM...
IF THIS WORKS FOR YOU, IT WORKS FOR ME!
www.bencomicstrip.com

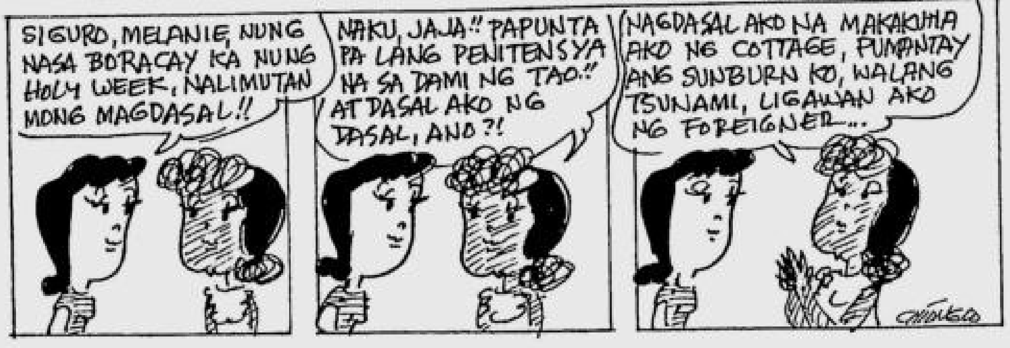
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


DITO KA BA MADALAS TUMAMBAY TALAGA? SA LAGOON?
OO NGA... PAHINGA... PAMPA-ALIS NG STRESS...
HUOOH! AYOS AH... MUKHANG SANAY NA SANAY KA NA NGA DITO AH.
WOW! NANINIWALA KA PALA SA MGA NUNÔ?
TABI-TABI PO... TABI-TABI PO...
TANGE! DEHINS KA SA MGA NUNÔ NAKIKIRAAN TODITS...
AAAAAGH!
ARAY!
ASTEEG!
KRAK

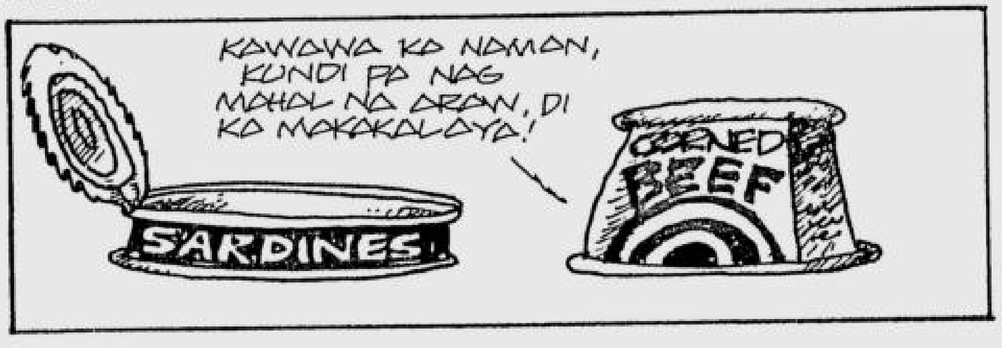
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SIGURO, MELANIE, NUNG NASA BORACAY KA NUNG HOLY WEEK, NALIMUTAN MONG MAGDASAL!!
NAKU, JAJA!! PAPUNTA PA LANG PENITENSYA NA SA DAMI NG TAO!! AT DASAL AKO NG DASAL, ANO?!
NAGDASAL AKO NA MAKAKUHA AKO NG COTTAGE, PUMANTAY ANG SUNBURN KO, WALANG TSUNAMI, LIGAWAN AKO NG FOREIGNER...
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING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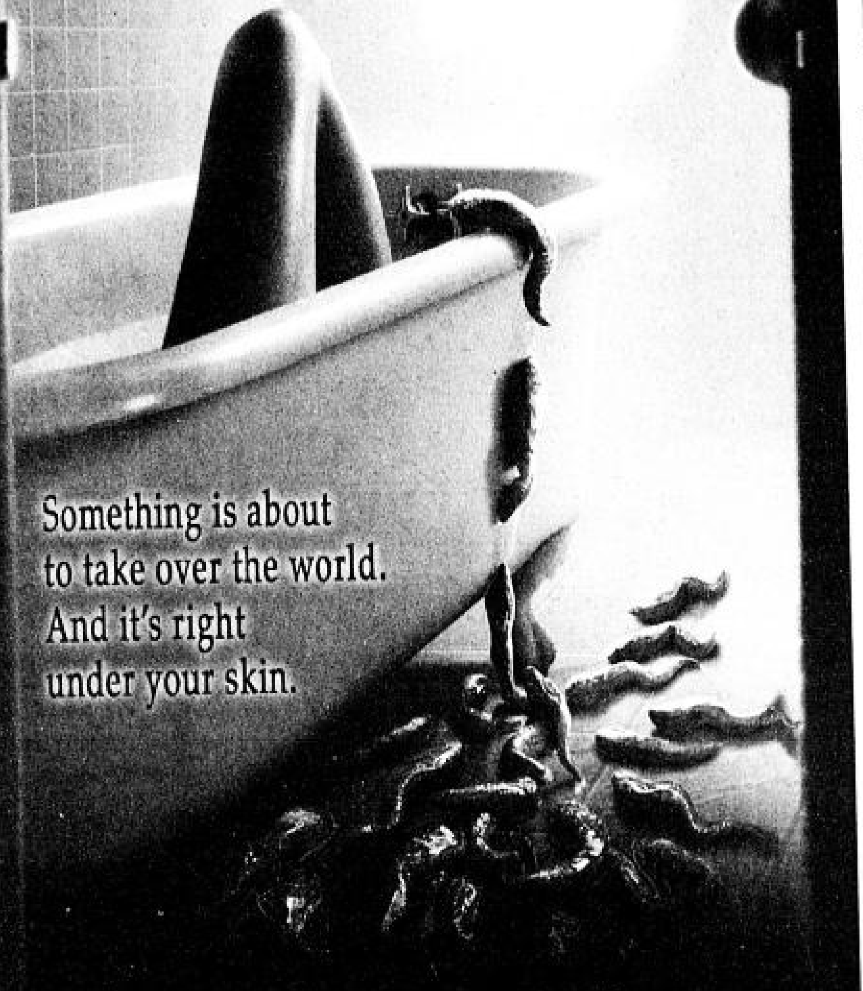

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APRIL 26

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① ICE AGE 2
MTRCB: GP
1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00 LMF

② EIGHT BELOW
MTRCB: GP
2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 LMF

③ SUBMERGE
MTRCB: R-13
12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

④ TRISTAN & ISOLDE
MTRCB: R-13
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

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MTRCB: GP 11:40, 1:45, 3:50, 5:55, 8:00 LMF

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Cinema	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1 GLORIETTA 1	D' LUCKY ONES	EIGHT BELOW	PAMAHIIN	SUBMERGED			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	D' LUCKY ONES	THX TRISTAN & ISOLDE 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	SUBMERGED	JUST FRIENDS	EIGHT BELOW	PAMAHIIN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	EIGHT BELOW	ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	THX EIGHT BELOW 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE HILLS HAVE EYES 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	RENT 1:15, 3:45, 6:15, 8:45, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	TRISTAN & ISOLDE 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX EIGHT BELOW	D' LUCKY ONES	ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	PAMAHIIN	TRISTAN & ISOLDE		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	EIGHT BELOW	TRISTAN & ISOLDE	SHE'S THE MAN	D' LUCKY ONES			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	D' LUCKY ONES	SUBMERGED	PAMAHIIN	EIGHT BELOW	ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		

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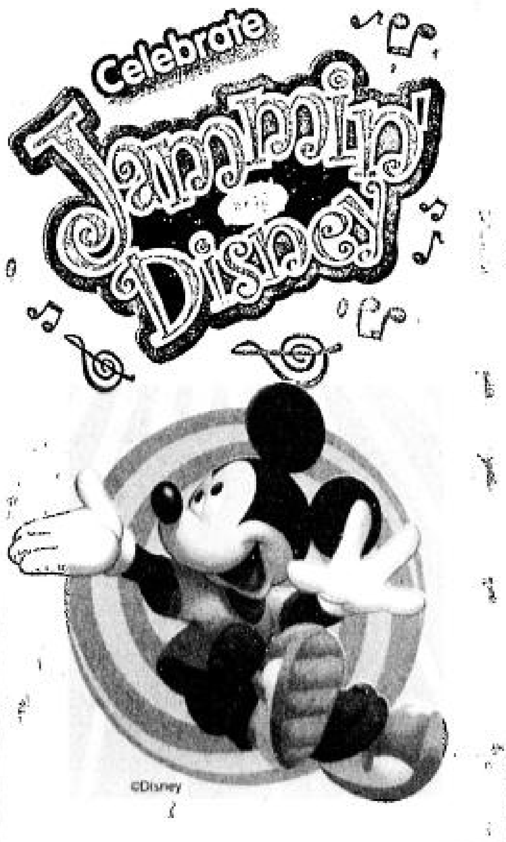

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Blanca Gomez, 'balikbayan'

Daisy Romualdez's younger sister and former Star of '66, revisits home, family and friends

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Rodel Rotoni
Additional photos courtesy of Blanca Gomez and Lilibeth Nakpil of Sampaguita Pictures

WHILE PACKING HER *BAlikbayan* boxes, she casually told her granddaughter that she'd be spending Christmas in the Philippines.

The kid looked quite upset, as if unwilling to part with her grandmom. She asked pointedly: "But how about our sleep-overs?"

For a moment there, their roles were reversed, the *lola* needing to ask permission from her *apo*. "She talks like an adult at times," the proud grandmother said.

Last holiday season, former Sampaguita star Blanca Gomez, now based in Los Angeles, visited Manila and her hometown in Romblon. "I met with all my relatives, my nieces and grandchildren in the province," she recounted. "We're 10 in the brood. My seven sisters are in the Philippines. One brother is also in the US, another has passed away."

In Manila, she stayed with older sister Daisy Romualdez, who was also a Sampaguita contract player.

The trip had proven to be so enjoyable, she extended her vacation to three months. (She flew back to LA in March, with plans to return soon.)

"Family is the only thing I miss," she said. She quit show biz in 1979, migrated to the US in 1984 and visited only briefly in 1991.

Overseas calls

Whenever homesickness caught up with her, she made overseas calls to her sisters. "Just to hear their voices."

She has remained close to her siblings—yes, even to the formidable Daisy, the one perceived as "feisty and fiery" in show biz circles.

"That's just her image," Blanca insisted. "In real life, she's kind-hearted. It's just that she's a fighter and she won't back down from defending her loved ones. She has always been like that, even when we were children."

BLANCA, right, in "Sayonara, My Darling" with Rosemarie Sonora.

IN "Mga Batang Turista" with Ramil Rodriguez

Family has indeed remained a constant in her ever-changing life.

America can be a harsh, lonely place for migrants, she pointed out. "The lifestyle is fast. Very hectic."

She's been in the rat race for two decades. (Upon her arrival in the US, she managed a restaurant for seven years before taking on the duties of a full-time mom.)

"I told my kids that I needed a break, a change of atmosphere," she said of her recent vacation.

In Manila, she played *balikbayan* to the hilt—partying with friends and reuniting with her Sampaguita family.

In the Greenhills parking lot, she accidentally bumped into Nene Vera-Perez, the Sampaguita matriarch. "I was so happy to see her! I was really planning to call her after our Romblon trip. Right there and then, we set a lunch date at the Vera-Perez home."

For her kids, she hopes to buy copies of her old movies with the studio, especially those with fellow Stars of '66—Rosemarie Sonora, Gina Pareño, Shirley Moreno, Bert Leroy Jr., Ramil and Pepito Rodriguez, and the late Loretta Marquez, Dindo Fernando and Edgar Salcedo.

Pepito was a fave partner and Gina was her bosom buddy in those carefree days.

Among her favorite movies were "Wish Upon a Star" ("my first drama picture") and "Sayonara, My Darling" ("we filmed in Japan.")

She also loved the "Mga Batang" series—"Mga Batang Turista." "Mga Bata ng Lagim," "Mga Batang Iskwater."

She also found "Mga Anak sa Pagkakasala" memorable. "It was my first film and it was directed by Eddie Garcia," she recalled. "He was a pro. On our first shooting day in UP Diliman, he simply told me to relax. My partner was Eddie Gutierrez, Daisy's friend. To make me feel at ease, [Gutierrez] befriended and visited me at our house."

Her first talent fee? "I earned P500 per picture and was given a P50 allowance."

"A long story," she described her "discovery."

Jose Perez, Mrs. Nene's late husband and Sampaguita producer, initially spotted her in a church when she was 13.

At first, Blanca was reluctant to try the movies. "He waited for two years," she said. "When I turned 15, he asked me again."

Substitute campus

After some hemming and hawing, she finally said yes.

"Doc Perez offered me a scholarship," she pointed out. "I attended night classes, from 5 to 9 p.m., at the Far Eastern University, where I finished high school."

Sampaguita proved to be a substitute campus for young Blanca.

"Doc Perez was a wonderful producer," she said.

He led by example. "If our call time was 8 a.m., he'd be there at 7:30 a.m. He made sure that we were well-trained and always impeccably dressed. Mrs. Perez personally picked our clothes, made by Ramon Valera and Pitoy Moreno. Doc Perez brought us to parties at the Manila Hotel. He treated us like his own kids."

The discipline instilled in Sampaguita served her well in America, where she raised her children Bridget, Cristina, Beverly and Ryan.

"Bridget works as mediator for Mercury Insurance," she related. "Cristina is a student counselor/teacher at the University of Phoenix. Beverly is a registered nurse. Ryan works in a restaurant."

If her kids all turned out well, she believes it's because she stubbornly held on to Filipino traditions.

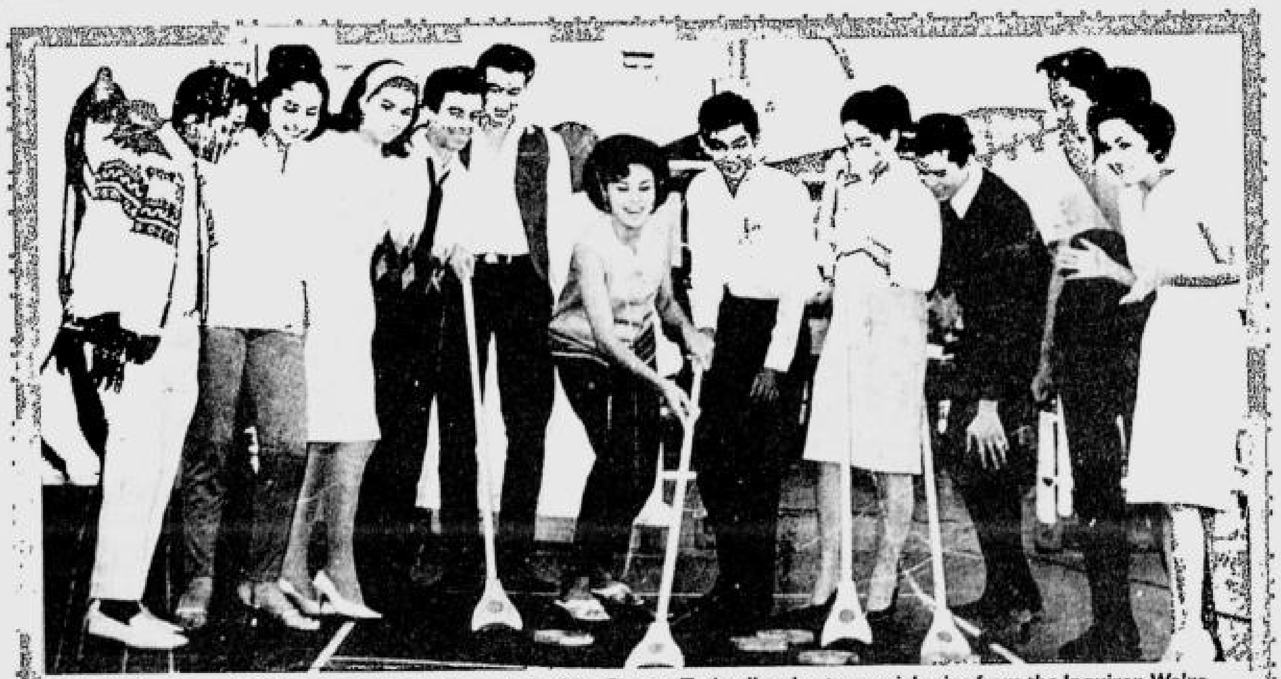
She admitted that she had made a career out of being a mom.

"When they were young, I drove my kids to school and fetched them after,"

BLANCA/ A2-4

YESTERDAY

WITH children Ryan, Cristina, Beverly and Bridget last year at her birthday dinner.



NAME the Stars of '66 in this photo from the movie "Mga Batang Turista" and get a special prize from the Inquirer. We're picking three winners. Send answers to pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ROUNDUP

Cancel it!

THE PHILIPPINE Alliance Against Pornography Inc. is urging the Roman Catholic Church, all other religious groups and the Filipino people "to immediately withdraw support" from ABS-CBN.

In a statement circulated to media organizations, PAAP spokesperson Aldo Filomeno said ABS-CBN had "declared total war against children, the lowly and oppressed" by showing "no remorse ... despite the massacre of more than 80 people and injuries to hundreds, during the fateful morning of 'Wowowee's' first anniversary."

ABS-CBN should have cancelled "Wowowee" altogether, Filomeno insisted.

He added: "Various shows ... on the Lopez-owned [network] promote seduction, lust, pornography, marital infidelity, debauchery, graphic display of violence and criminal activities. Only evil spirits will enjoy watching these highly questionable programs."

Spacey in hot seat

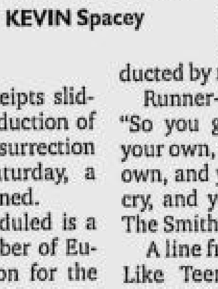
LONDON—Hollywood star Kevin Spacey has pledged to keep running one of Britain's most famous theaters, despite a mauling from critics and questions over why the Old Vic may stand empty for the next five months.

"My commitment has never been stronger," the Oscar-winning artistic director of the renowned London theatre company told Reuters.

With box office receipts sliding, The Old Vic's production of Arthur Miller's "Resurrection Blues" closed on Saturday, a week earlier than planned.

The next play scheduled is a production in September of Eugene O'Neill's "A Moon for the Misbegotten," starring Spacey himself, who took over the historic theater in September 2004.

"People calling for my resignation because of the plays we put on is the height of arrogance," he said. "The critics don't own the theater." *Reuters*



KEVIN Spacey

Lyrics for Britain

LONDON—The Irish band U2 has given Britain its favorite song lyric, according to a survey released Monday.

The line "One life, with each other, sisters, brothers" from the 1992 song "One" topped a poll conducted by music channel VH1.

Runner-up was the downbeat "So you go and you stand on your own, and you leave on your own, and you go home, and you cry, and you want to die" from The Smiths' "How Soon is Now."

A line from Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" — "I feel stupid and contagious, here we are now, entertain us" — came in third. Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and Coldplay's "Yellow" took fourth and fifth places.

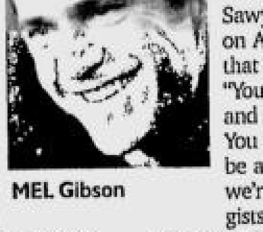
More than 13,000 people participated in the poll, choosing from a list of 100 lyrics selected by music industry figures. *AP*

Gibson's latest film delayed

LOS ANGELES—Movie fans will have to wait a bit longer to see Mel Gibson's next foray into olden times, the Mayan epic "Apocalypto."

The action adventure has been bumped from Aug. 4 release to Dec. 8. A spokesperson for Disney, which is releasing "Apocalypto," said the production had fallen behind because of heavy rains in the wilds of Mexico, where Gibson is shooting.

Like Gibson's religious blockbuster "The Passion of the Christ," which was shot in Aramaic and Latin, "Apocalypto" is being done in an ancient tongue, Yucatec Maya. *AP*



MEL Gibson

No Catholic baptism

LOS ANGELES—Katie Holmes, 27, was raised a Catholic but, says fiance Tom Cruise, 43, their soon-to-arrive baby will not have a Catholic baptism.

Cruise told Diane Sawyer in an interview on ABC's "Primetime," that aired Friday night: "You can be Catholic and be a Scientologist. You can be Jewish and be a Scientologist. But we're just Scientologists."

Holmes' switch to Scientology has sparked reports of a rift between her devout parents, Ohio natives Martin and Kathleen, and the actor, who introduced her to Scientology. *AP*

Cartoon man

Soumitra "Sunny" Saha is senior vice president, regional advertising sales and marketing, for Turner Entertainment Networks Asia (Tena).

Based in Hong Kong, Sunny directly oversees television and interactive advertising sales and marketing activities for Cartoon Network's India, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Pakistan and South East Asia feeds; Pogo, Tena's kids channel in India and Boomerang in Australia and South East Asia.

SOUMITRA "Sunny" Saha

ETHEL Booba didn't scratch.

MAUI Taylor didn't speak.

Kiss and break up ... or battles in Bora

RUSHES

THEY MEANT TO "PATCH THINGS UP." But on-today-off-tomorrow couple Ethel Booba and Alex Crisano ended up duking it out at the Boracay police station. Ethel was reportedly jealous of a member of an all-female sexy group. He said: She scratched and hit him on the head. She said: He banged his own head against the wall.

Hmm, we can can believe her. That would explain the dents we saw on the walls of the condo unit they used to share.

Bora battle 2

Boracay wasn't big enough for another pair of bickering ex-lovers. Maui Taylor reportedly snubbed ex-boyfriend Brian Revilla when they crossed paths in a restaurant where the entire clan was celebrating his mom Lani Mercado's birthday. Even so, Maui sent "Tita" Lani an SMS birthday greeting.

Bora 'battle' 3

They were quarreling *daw*, but former sweethearts Gwen Garci and Andrew Wolff were spotted together on the island. Gwen explained to reporters, "He's trying to win me back." TV footage didn't make it look like she was playing hard to get. *Tsk, tsk.*

TONI out

Bora battle 4

Also seen on Bora last week were Joey Marquez and Alicia Mayer, who recently split up. They prudently partied on opposite sides of the island, however.,

Lighter, younger

Lorna Tolentino checked husband Rudy Fernandez out of the hospital on Monday. She refuted reports that Daboy is set to go abroad for an extensive checkup or, as the rumor mills put it, "a second opinion." She said they had to cancel a planned vacation this month. Now, she said, Daboy is recovering well. She told Inquirer, sounding pleased, "He's 10 pounds lighter, and looks younger."

MARIEL in

How about ... Pilita?

If she's willing to go through the requisite audition (*see page A2-1*), Asia's Queen of Song Pilita Corrales, we think, should be an excellent judge for "Philippine Idol." Now, is she?

PILITA Corrales

Toni out

Toni Gonzaga is out of "Pinoy Big Brother" as main host and Mariel Rodriguez is taking her place (*see story on this page*). We wonder why?

Gong Li, believe it

Chinese actress Gong Li will star in "Believe It or Not," a new movie directed by Tim Burton, Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper reported. Gong starts filming in October with Jim Carrey, who will play Robert L. Ripley, the cartoonist who created the famous Believe It or Not! series. The report said Gong beat Ziyi Zhang to get the role. AP

ZIYI Zhang

Does she mind?

But does Ziyi mind? The younger actress, who was recently named a Cannes juror, says it doesn't bother her to keep making Chinese movies, even if she has broken through Hollywood—as long as the scripts are high-quality. In fact, she is appearing in the upcoming court drama, "The Banquet," directed by Chinese director Feng Xiaogang. AP

His 'stupid fault'

In London, British pop star George Michael crashed into three cars while trying to park his SUV in London early Sunday, the Daily Mirror reported Monday. The 42-year-old former Wham! vocalist was arrested in February on suspicion of possessing drugs after being found slumped at the wheel of a car. He said in a statement at the time: "It is my own stupid fault, as usual." AFP

TOM Hanks

Tom Hanks' top 5

In Berlin, Tom Hanks picked his top five favorite films of all time. "I just can't see enough of 2001: A Space Odyssey (by Stanley Kubrick, 1968)'" the actor told Germany's Bild newspaper in an interview published last week. Hanks also picked "Elephant" (2003) by Gus Van Sant, "The Godfather" (1972) by Francis Ford Coppola, "Fargo" (1996) by Joel and Ethan Coen, and "Boogie Nights" (1997) by Paul Thomas Anderson. Reuters

4th biggest buyer of 'Asianovelas'

By Nini Valera

THE PHILIPPINES IS THE FOURTH biggest buyer of *Asianovelas*, according to Leng Raymundo, ABS-CBN vice president for program acquisition.

Raymundo, who is also the network's most-traveled executive, told INQUIRER Entertainment that Japan is the top buyer, China the next biggest buyer, followed by Taiwan.

Philippine-made *telenovelas*, like Jericho Rosales' "Pangako sa 'Yo," have also been exhibited in trade shows abroad, and Malaysia has, in fact, acquired the local soap.

Raymundo said the popularity of *Asianovelas*, which have become a staple for the prime-time programming of both ABS-CBN and GMA 7, could be attributed to the similarity in cultures of these biggest buyers.

"Asians apparently have the same sentiments and sensibilities," she observed. "There's also that *kilig* (thrill over romantic team-ups) factor in the shows that is also a common denominator in choosing what shows to buy."

The most popular *Asianovelas* these days are made in Korea, Raymundo added.

An Asianovela with a feisty heroine always scores high with top buyers, Raymundo said.

Other considerations, she said, are romance and comedy values of a show, plus action sequences.

So far, the all-time top rater among the *Asianovelas* is "Meteor Garden," which starred the popular Taiwanese boy group F4.

Raymundo stressed the cost-effectiveness of airing foreign acquired shows, saying that buying an *Asianovela* was less expensive than producing a local show in the magnitude of "Panday," even if the network has to dub the show in Filipino and create a local theme song for the show.

The network, she said, also spends a sizeable amount in promoting an *Asianovela* even if the stars are not here physically for media events.

"If their schedules allow it, we always invite the stars to come here," Raymundo said. In the Philippines, Raymundo bids against rival network GMA 7 for *Asianovelas*.

She missed out on "Jewel in the Palace," which is now a ratings ruler on GMA 7, but she did not regret this, she said. "We have different tastes. I rely mostly on my guts when I bid for a show. So far, my guts have not failed me."

Raymundo also predicted that Latin *telenovelas* like "Ruby" would be the next big thing in Philippine television, although these might meet with some objection for being bolder and more adult in content.

ABS-CBN's latest Korean import is "Princess Lulu."

Bucky bids bye to 'AI' quest

By Kathryn Fatima Reyes

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

"AMERICAN IDOL" JUDGE PAULA ABDUL gives the tilt finalists little tokens every week that they manage to stay on.

This was revealed to INQUIRER Entertainment by Bucky Covington, the latest contestant to get booted from the show.

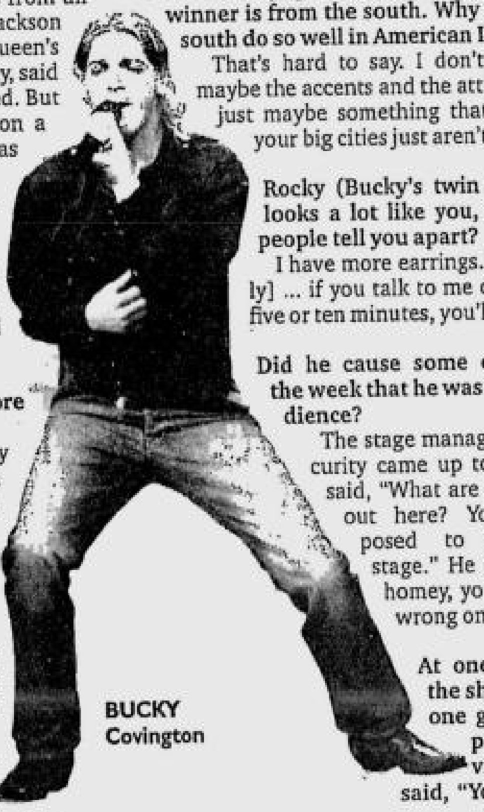
In an interview arranged by Star TV on Thursday (Friday in Manila), Bucky said the most memorable gift he got from the lady judge was a necklace with a little star on it that says, "Reach for the stars" and, on the back, "You just might become one."

The 28-year-old country singer from North Carolina disagreed with critics who say that as a judge, Paula should not be too "enthusiastic" during performances.

For a performer like him, Bucky said, to be able to make somebody dance while he is singing is a great confidence booster, especially if that somebody is a judge on the No. 1 reality TV talent search contest in the US.

Bucky, who got good reviews from all three judges—Abdul, Randy Jackson and Sion Cowell after singing Queen's "Fat-Bottomed Girls" last Tuesday, said he was surprised to be eliminated. But he said it was good to leave on a week when his performance was solid.

"If I'm not going to win, eighth is just as good as fourth to me," Bucky said. "It seems a lot of people are like, 'I didn't think you should win it.' But I'd rather have that than, 'How did you make it this far?'



BUCKY Covington

Can you tell us a little bit more about your wife?

She is wonderful. They say behind every good man is a good woman. Crystal, she stands in front of me. She's been more than supportive. I did a good job picking that one.

Both you and Taylor have had experience playing bars and nightclubs. Did that give you an edge?

Definitely. When you're used to playing Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights in a smoky little bar room, a minute and a half every week is nothing.

Did any one week, as far as the themes went, throw you off and make you say, "Oh no, what am I going to pick?"

Yes, the main one that threw me actually was Stevie Wonder. But I came across "Superstition" and I was like, "Hey kid, we can knock this out." So I ended up doing that.

Tell us a little bit about the Carolina triangle there with you, Kellie, and Chris. Did you talk much about your connection?

It's a nice, comforting feeling to know there are three of you out of North Carolina. But then again, where other people might have like a whole state voting for them, we have to split it up into threes. So I'm sure it probably hurts a little bit, but all is well.

So five out of the seven left are from the south. Every previous "American Idol" winner is from the south. Why does the south do so well in American Idol?

That's hard to say. I don't know if maybe the accents and the attitudes, or just maybe something that a lot of your big cities just aren't used to.

Rocky (Bucky's twin brother) looks a lot like you, how can people tell you apart?

I have more earrings. [Seriously] ... if you talk to me or him for five or ten minutes, you'll know.

Did he cause some confusion the week that he was in the audience?

The stage manager and security came up to him and said, "What are you doing out here? You're supposed to be back stage." He said, "Cue homey, you have the wrong one."

At one point in the show, someone gave you a piece of advice and said, "You need to

TITLE/ A2-4

LAUREN Dyogi PDI PHOTO

12 out of 30,000 picked for 'PBB' teen edition

By Nini Valera

AS CHALLENGING as picking the winner in any "Pinoy Big Brother" edition is choosing the housemates.

PBB director and business unit head Lauren Dyogi said he has met about 30,000 wannabe housemates from all over the country during auditions held in Cebu, Davao and Manila for the reality show's forthcoming teen edition.

"About 30,000 teens eyeballed me during these auditions," he said, laughing.

Throughout the eyeballing, Dyogi, who was once a ramp model, had maintained a straight face even if some of the hopefuls tried very hard to make him smile or catch his attention by tumbling down the aisle. This was what happened during the last audition held at Dish inside the ABS-CBN compound last month during which, Dyogi admitted, he had to make a lot of tough calls.

"I wish I could pick more," he said. "There is so much talent out there. But the playing field had to be narrowed down [to 12]."

Among the chosen ones, Dyogi hopes to

TITLE/ A2-4

Story of heroism that needs to be told

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SOME MONTHS AGO, WE CAUGHT A TV documentary about the fatal flight on 9-11 of United 93, the third airplane that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania.

The documentary was compelling and surprising because it revealed the heroism of the flight's 40 passengers, who ended up attacking the terrorists and thus preventing them from crashing the plane into (some people conjecture) the White House.

Now comes news that a film version about that third 9-11 flight, titled "United 93," is about to open in the States. It's a tale of heroism that needs to be told on the big screen, but views on it thus far are decidedly mixed.

Some of the plane passengers' relatives are proud of the movie, but others feel that it calls up painful memories too soon after 9-11.

What about the public? Some prospective viewers agree that it's too soon. And some people who've caught the movie's trailer have found it too unsettlingly graphic. Reacting to those comments, one theater has stopped showing the trailer.

For our part, our positive reaction to the TV documentary has primed us for the movie version, so the inspirational values of its tale of courage should salve whatever feelings of pain or horror the production could engender.

True, there's something about the special power of film, due to its huge screen and persuasive visual language, that could make the movie a more in-your-face viewing experience than the TV documentary. But, we're prepared to take all that because we believe that "United 93's" heroic saga is a story that must be told on the big screen.

Coincidentally, just about when the film's trailer started to be screened in theaters, the flight's voice recording was heard by the public, when it was used as evidence in the ongoing trial of the terrorists involved in the 9-11 events.

This has served to make the story of United Airlines Flight 93 even more freshly significant to viewers, so the film should get good viewership when it opens next month.

What about a film on the other 9-11 events, specifically the airborne attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center? We hear that Oliver Stone is completing work on such a production, and that it'll start its run later this year.

If the reaction to "United 93" is strong, Stone's 9-11 movie should attract huge viewership. But, it could prove to be even more controversial than "United 93," if Stone opts to tell its story like it was, replete with heroism *and* the airborne attack's horrific consequences.

Is it too soon for all that to be vividly recalled on the big screen? *When* would be the right time to provide cinematic closure to those heroic tragic and even apocalyptic events?

Movies on TV

ON HBO today, 6:30 a.m., "Big Fish." 10:45 a.m., "Mermaids." 9 p.m., "Mambo Kings." Tomorrow at 12:15 p.m., "Beyond Borders." 4:30 p.m., "Catch-22." 8 p.m., "Rome: Pharsalus." 9 p.m., "Rome: Caesarion." 9:50 p.m., "Rome: Utica." April 21 at 8 a.m., "Surviving Picasso." 4 p.m., "Moscow on the Hudson."

On Cinemax today at 6 a.m., "Phantom of the Rue Morgue." 12 noon, "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story." Tomorrow at 4:45 p.m., "House of Wax." April 21 at 2:30 p.m., "Beetlejuice." 4 p.m., "Mystic River." 6:30 p.m., "The Adventures of Brisco County Jr. 2:40 a.m., "The Appaloosa."

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Film, TV workshops

THE TAGAYTAY Film, Broadcast and Creative workshops will be held this year from May 8 to 13 and May 22 to 27 at the DAP Conference Center and Hotel. They include Compelling Video Production for Institutional Presentations (Casino/Tintin Gomez), Effective Scriptwriting for AVP's (Nick Tayag), How to Make Your Advocacy Radio Programs Entertaining (Tato Malay), Photography Is Beyond Digital (Joey Tanedo), TV Hosting (Chi-Chi Robles), Cool Design for Community/Company Paper (Lynett Villariba), Taking the Boredom Out of Corporate Presentations (Doi Rosete), Communication Planning and Crisis PR (Ray Junia), How to Direct for Film (Joel Lamangan and others), and Writing for Film (Roy Iglesias). Call 8929421 or 4133840.

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Treasury bond rate plummets to 6.5%

Down from 10.5% as cash-rich banks swamp auction with P14-B bids

By Michelle V. Remo

THE YIELD OF THE FOUR-YEAR TREASURY BONDS PLUMMETED by 4 percentage points to only 6.5 percent yesterday as banks swamped the auction with more than P14 billion worth of bids.

The new four-year bond rate of 6.5 percent came from a high of 10.5 percent set during the last auction in August of last year.

"Market projection was that the rate would settle at 6.625 percent, but it actually landed at a lower rate of 6.5 percent," National Treasurer Omar Cruz said after the auction.

Cruz took pride in the declining yields, saying lower interest rates would eventually make it cheaper for businesses to borrow money.

Interest rates on government securities are used by banks as basis for setting interest rates on their loans.

Cruz attributed the strong appetite for the four-year bonds to the fact that banks have a lot of idle cash.

At the same time, the government's borrowing requirement is declining due to its shrinking budget deficit.

Tenders for the 4-year bonds reached P14.1 billion, more than four times higher than the government's debt offer of only P3.5 billion.

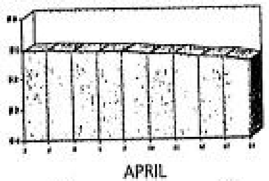
The Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee accepted P3.5 billion worth of bids, raising in full the government's borrowing program.

The drop in the four-year treasury bond rate yesterday followed the across-the-board

TREASURY/ B9

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



P 51.50 = $

As of 5 p.m., April 18, 2006

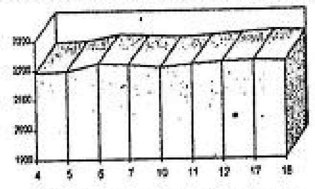
¥ 117.84 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 18, 2006

GOLD: $614.30-614.80

per ounce Hong Kong, April 18, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B9)

Shares close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.16 PERCENT LOWer yesterday on profit-taking in the face of ris-

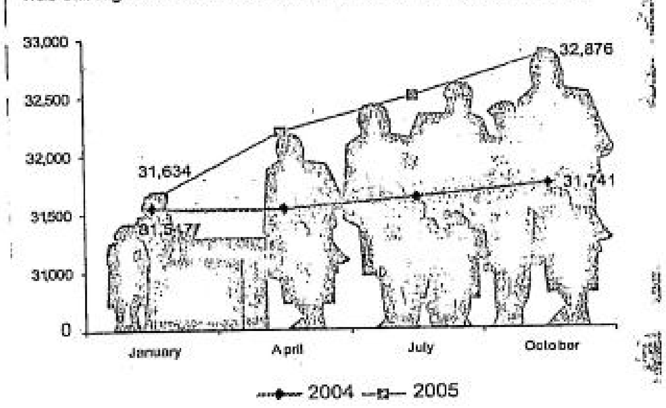
SHARES/ B2

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

More people employed in 2005

The average number of Filipinos employed in 2005 rose to 32.3 million, up from 31.6 million the previous year. However, job creation was still higher in 2004 at 978,000, compared to 700,000 in 2005.



Kate Pedroso PDI Research

Source: The 2005 Employment Situation
Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics

RESTRUCTURING PLAN UNDER WAY

Coke feels pinch of competition

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INROADS MADE BY NON-CARBONated "energy and sports" beverages into the soft drink market have forced manufacturers to restructure and stay profitable.

Coca Cola Beverage Group, the soft drinks arm of San Miguel Corp., has closed two bottling plants last year as part of its restructuring efforts, SMC said in a financial report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

San Miguel did not disclose the loca-

COKE/ B9

WHAT'S INSIDE

(Almost) No room at the inn /B5

Interest rates seen increasing this year /B7

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New species seen revitalizing shrimp industry

By Ronnel W. Domingo

AN UMBRELLA GROUP OF EXPORTERS YESterday said shrimp producers were looking at a recovery of the local industry with a promising new species of disease-resistant shrimp.

At the same time, the Philippine Exporters Confederation said seaweed farmers were losing ground in the international market due to the appreciation of the peso against the dollar.

Philexport officials said the Philippine Shrimp Industry Association or Philshrimp was bent on regaining markets they lost in the aftermath of prawn pestilence in the 1990s.

Shrimp firms are adopting the latest in prawn farm technology as well as best practices in hatching and feeding stocks.

They are also commercializing other species aside from the tiger prawn, the group said.

Philshrimp, with the help of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, has taken up research and development efforts to discover exotic shrimp varieties that may be produced commercially and are less prone to diseases than the erstwhile favorite—the tiger prawn.

Results of the projects in BFAR's pilot farms would be the highlight of the 5th National Shrimp Industry Congress slated in mid-2006.

But Philexport said that results have been encouraging this early, such that the white prawn project is expected to hasten the revitalization of the industry.

On the other hand, Philexport members in Region 9 called for a similar move for the seaweed industry, which is losing ground as an international leader in the production of carrageenan and related products.

Alfredo Sarte, president of Philexport Region 9, said the stronger local currency has pulled down the price of dried seaweed to a range of P14-P16 a kilo, which makes cultivation unprofitable.

Sarte said the drop in prices from a range of P18 to P20 a kilo last year has discouraged thousands of farmers from raising seaweed.

Shares close lower

From page B1

ing oil prices, dealers said.

However, continued gains in mining stocks trimmed the market's losses as metal prices rose to fresh multi-year highs overnight.

The composite index ended down 3.64 points at 2,225.72 after trading between 2,222.02 and 2,235.91. The broader all-shares index retreated 3.71 points to 1,365.74.

Losers led gainers 71 to 34, with 52 stocks unchanged.

Volume was 11.24 billion shares worth P2.2 billion.

"The geopolitical situation in Iran is pushing up oil and other commodity prices and it is creating inflationary concerns. That may put pressure on the central bank to eventually raise interest rates," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

Dealers said the market might continue to head lower in coming sessions with upcoming first-quarter corporate results unlikely to help.

"Earnings in the first quarter are likely to be less robust than usual because of the higher taxes companies have to pay," Vistan said, referring to a law that raised value-added taxes and corporate income taxes in February.

Top-traded PLDT closed down P15 to P1,965 while rival Globe Telecom retreated P5 to P885. *AFP*

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
First Judicial Region
Branch 59
Baguio City
(ADDITIONAL FAMILY COURT OF BAGUIO)

LETICIA F. CORPUZ,
Petitioner
Civil Case No. 619-FC
for
Declaration of Nullity of Marriage
-versus-
HOSSAM ELDIN MOHAMED ALI,
Respondent
x-------x

SUMMONS
(By Publication)

WHEREAS, the herein petitioner filed a verified petition on October 27, 2005, herein quoted as follows:

"COMES NOW the PETITIONER represented by the LAW FIRM and unto the Honorable Court most respectfully states:

The PARTIES

1. PETITIONER LETICIA F. CORPUZ is of legal age, Filipino citizen, and a resident of No. 285 Mercury Alley, Upper Quezon Hill, Baguio City where she may be served with summons and other processes of this Honorable Court.

2. RESPONDENT HOSSAM ELDIN MOHAMED ALI is of legal age and an Egyptian citizen. His present whereabouts is unknown, but it is believed that if he were still alive today he could be in his home country at Cairo, Egypt. Thus, necessitating the need of EXTRA TERRITORIAL SERVICE by PUBLICATION of the summons and other processes of the Honorable Court.

The FACTS

3. Sometime in the year 1991, the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT met at Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The PETITIONER was an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) employed as a nurse while the RESPONDENT was a doctor at New Al-amal Dispensary at Bisha, Saudi Arabia.

4. A simple friendship developed into a serious relationship. Eventually, the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT became lovers. The sweet romance lasted for almost six (6) months.

5. Thereafter, the PETITIONER finished her two (2) years working contract and decided to return to stay in the Philippines. While in the Philippines, the PETITIONER learned from a friend that the RESPONDENT left Saudi Arabia and went back to his native country of Egypt.

6. Subsequently, the PETITIONER was able to communicate with the RESPONDENT while he was in Egypt. After a few months, the RESPONDENT informed the PETITIONER that he returned to Al Bisha, Saudi Arabia.

7. The passion between the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT returned and was met with a marriage. The RESPONDENT proposed to the PETITIONER that as soon as he was able to settle at Al-Bisha, Saudi Arabia he wanted the latter to follow as his wife.

8. In the course of the long distance relationship between the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT, the former who was still in the Philippines met a certain Reverend John Baterna. The latter secured a MARRIAGE LICENSE dated April 14, 1994 for the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT at Quezon City. Likewise, he processed the marriage contract of the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT. The MARRIAGE CONTRACT is hereto attached as Annex "A".

9. A cursory examination of the MARRIAGE CONTRACT will show that it is complete in all pertinent details except for the official registry number. It is stated therein that Reverend JOHN BATERNA solemnized the marriage of the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT on May 22, 1994 at Baguio City. The MARRIAGE CONTRACT bears the signature of the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT. Similarly, two (2) witnesses in the marriage namely RENATO BERGONIA and ESTRELLITA ROJAS attested to the celebration of the marriage by likewise signing the MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

10. However, no actual MARRIAGE CEREMONY between the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT took place. RESPONDENT did not come to the Philippines for the celebration of the marriage. PETITIONER sent by mail a copy of the MARRIAGE CONTRACT from the Philippines to the RESPONDENT who was in Egypt. The RESPONDENT signed the MARRIAGE CONTRACT in Egypt.

11. The PETITIONER was made to believe that it did not matter if the RESPONDENT was not present as long as his signature appears in the MARRIAGE CONTRACT. It was only later that PETITIONER was advised by a lawyer that the marriage was null and void for lack of essential and formal requisites of marriage.

12. It is worth stating that the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT did not even personally apply for the MARRIAGE LICENSE. In this respect, it was Reverend JOHN BATERNA who facilitated the application and release of the MARRIAGE LICENSE before the LOCAL CIVIL REGISTRAR of Quezon City.

13. Nevertheless, unaware that the marriage was void ab initio the PETITIONER used the MARRIAGE CONTRACT in her application for a VISA in Saudi Arabia. The VISA of the PETITIONER allowing her to stay in Saudi (sic) Arabia was approved. The PETITIONER flew to Saudi Arabia in December 1994. She was welcomed by the RESPONDENT and they lived together treated as her lawful spouse. The PETITIONER and RESPONDENT lived together as husband and wife.

14. Out of the amorous relationship of the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT they begot one child who was christened JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI. The child was born on June [illegible] 1996 at Baguio City. A copy of the CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH of JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI is hereto attached as Annex "B".

15. Sadly, before the birth of JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI the union of the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT suffered from serious setbacks. Among the problems were as follows: (1) There was a clash of culture between the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT brought about by differences in religion; (2) The PETITIONER was often neglected and treated as an object by the RESPONDENT; (3) The PETITIONER and RESPONDENT seldom saw each other as they were earning a living in different places away from each other; and (4) The RESPONDENT resigned from his work and returned to Egypt in September 1995 and just left PETITIONER behind in Saudi Arabia.

16. These predicaments aggravated by the insensitivity and uncaring attitude of the RESPONDENT prevailed the PETITIONER to deliver her firstborn in the Philippines.

17. After the birth of JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI in the Philippines, the PETITIONER never heard any word from the RESPONDENT. The PETITIONER tried to reach him but all her efforts were in vain. To date, she does not know his whereabouts much less if he were still alive.

18. In addition, the RESPONDENT showed no interest to the child JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI. Said child was raised and supported by no less than the PETITIONER and her relatives.

19. The PETITIONER was able to solely give the child JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI a decent living by finding overseas employment after her separation from the RESPONDENT.

The FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

20. To reiterate, the RESPONDENT was NOT PRESENT when the marriage was solemnized. There was no actual solemnization of marriage between the PETITIONER and RESPONDENT. It cannot be said that the RESPONDENT freely gave his CONSENT to the marriage in the presence of the solemnizing officer. As already stated, the RESPONDENT merely signed the MARRIAGE CONTRACT in Egypt.

21. The PETITIONER therefore prays for the DECLARATION OF NULLITY of her marriage with the RESPONDENT based on the applicable provisions of EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 209 of the FAMILY CODE of the PHILIPPINES hereunder quoted:

xxx

Article 2. No marriage shall be valid, unless these essential requisites are present:
(1) Legal capacity of the contracting parties who must be a male and a female; and
(2) Consent freely given in the presence of the solemnizing officer.
Article 3. The formal requisites of marriage are:
(1) Authority of the solemnizing authority;
(2) A valid marriage license except in the cases provided (sic) for in Chapter 2 of this title;
(3) A marriage ceremony which takes place with the appearance of the contracting parties before the solemnizing officer and their personal declaration that they take each other as husband and wife in the presence of not less than two witnesses of legal age. (53a, 55a)
Article 4. The absence of any of the essential or formal requisites shall render the marriage void ab initio, except as stated in Article 35(2).
A defect in any of the essential requisites shall render the marriage voidable as provided in Article 45.
An irregularity in the formal requisites shall not affect the validity of the marriage but the party or parties responsible for the irregularity shall be civilly, criminally and administratively liable. (n)
xxx

The SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

22. Likewise, the PETITIONER prays for the DECLARATION OF NULLITY of her marriage with the RESPONDENT based on Article 36 of EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 209 of the FAMILY CODE of the PHILIPPINES.

23. Evidently, the RESPONDENT treated the PETITIONER as a mere object that should follow him in blind obedience. Moreover, the RESPONDENT is a highly immature individual who does not take marital life seriously and its consequences. This can be summed with his continued failure to contact the PETITIONER and provide love, care and support to her and to their child JOSHUA HOSSAM MOHAMED ALI.

24. The PSYCHOLOGICAL INCAPACITY of the RESPONDENT was existing at the time of his union with the PETITIONER although it was not perceivable at the time but became manifested after and during the cohabitation.

25. The root cause of the foregoing PSYCHOLOGICAL INCAPACITY can be clinically and medically identified and proven by experts.

26. The PSYCHOLOGICAL INCAPACITY of RESPONDENT is grave, medically and clinically permanent and incurable to the point the RESPONDENT was and continues to be disabled from performing and assuming essential marital obligations of marriage.

The THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

27. Lastly, the RESPONDENT can be considered as an ABSENT SPOUSE the former has not been heard of by the PETITIONER for more than FOUR (4) YEARS now, it being unknown whether or not he (sic) still alive.

28. For all legal intents and purposes THE rules on presumptive death AS PROVIDED FOR by Article 41 of EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 209 of the FAMILY CODE of the PHILIPPINES can be applied to the RESPONDENT in order for the PETITIONER to remarry.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, it is most respectfully prayed of the Honorable court that the marriage between PETITIONER and RESPONDENT be declared NULL and VOID pursuant to the applicable laws, particularly the applicable provisions of EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 209 or the FAMILY CODE of the PHILIPPINES.

Such other reliefs just and equitable under the premises are likewise prayed for.

Baguio City, Philippines, October 26, 2005.

ECCA & PARTNERS LAW FIRM
(Counsel for the PETITIONER)
Suite 200 [illegible] Baguio City
by
(Sgd.) ABELARDO C. ESTRADA
IBP Lifetime No. [illegible]
PTR No. [illegible], 12-20-05
Roll No. 31155, 3-30-80
and
(Sgd.) JOSE ADRIAN M. BONIFACIO
IBP No. [illegible]
PTR No. [illegible]
Roll No. 40651, 05/08/04, Manila

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
BAGUIO CITY) s.s.
x-------x

VERIFICATION/CERTIFICATION

I, LETICIA F. CORPUZ, of legal age, Filipino citizen, and a resident of No. 285 Mercury Alley, Upper Quezon Hill, Baguio City after having been sworn to in accordance with law depose and say:

1. I am the PETITIONER in the above entitled case.
2. I have caused the preparation and filing of the foregoing PETITION.
3. All allegations therein are true and correct to the best of my own personal knowledge and based on authentic records.
4. I hereby certify that no other action involving the same issues on the above-entitled case has been commenced with the Supreme Court, court of (sic) Appeals or any other tribunal or agency, and to the best of my knowledge no such action or claim is pending therein. Should I learn that a similar action (sic) or proceeding is filed or pending before the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals or any tribunal or agency, I will undertake to report that fact within five (5) days therefrom to the court or agency where the original pleading and sworn certification contemplated herein above filed.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set hand this 24th day of October 2005 in the City of Baguio, Philippines.

(Sgd.) LETICIA F. CORPUZ
Affiant

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 24the (sic) day of October 2005, by AFFIANT who has presented to me an integrally complete document or instrument together with a competent evidence of her identity.

(Sgd.) ABELARDO C. ESTRADA
Notary Public
Until December 31, 2006
PTR No. [illegible], 12/20/05
Baguio City

Doc. No. 492
Page No. 99
Book No. XLI
Series of 2005."

WHEREAS, on January 20 2006, the petitioner through counsel filed with this court a Motion For Leave of Court to Serve Summons by Publication, it appearing that respondent is an Egyptian citizen whose present whereabouts is unknown.

WHEREAS, this court in its Order dated February 14, 2006 granted the petitioner's Motion For Leave of Court to Serve Summons by Publication to Serve Summons by Publication.

NOW THEREFORE, you the respondent HOSSAM ELDIN MOHAMED ALI is hereby summoned through this medium of publication, and therefore, required to file with the office of the Clerk of Court, Regional Trial Court of Baguio City at Justice Hall, Baguio City your answer to the above-quoted petition within thirty (30) days from date of last publication hereof, serving at the same time a copy of your answer upon the petitioner's counsel Atty. Abelardo C. Estrada with office address at Suite 200 Manzon Building, Session Road, Baguio City, and failure to do so within the period herein prescribed, the petitioner shall take judgment against you and demand from the court the remedies and reliefs prayed for in the said petition.

Let this summons be published at the expense of the petitioner in the Philippine Daily Inquirer a newspaper of national circulation once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks.

However, a copy of this summons, together with a copy of the petition and the Order dated February 14, 2006 were sent by registered mail at the Baguio City Post Office postage pre-paid to the respondent Hossam Eldin Mohamed Ali by registered mail, considering that said respondent has no last known address in the Philippines.

WITNESS THE HONORABLE ILUMINADA CABATO-CORTES, Presiding Judge of this Court, this 20th day of February, 2006 at Baguio City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) JESSICA D. GUANSING
Acting Branch Clerk of Court

(PDI: April 12 & 19, 2006)

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I. Events Evolution: Face-to-Face Marketing in the 20th Century (Changes in the Marketing Mix)
Speaker: Mr. Tom C. Banguis*
President, Philippine Marketing Association
II. The Brand: Focal Point of Experience
Speaker: To be announced
III. Live Marketing: Creative Ways of Mounting Spectacular Events
Speaker: Ms. Meryl Graham-Shlachterman
President, Vigrapost Inc. ASAP Member
IV. Trends in Event Selection: The Critical Decision
Speaker: Mr. Peter Miller*
Managing Director, 141 Worldwide Pte Ltd (Singapore)
V. Sponsorship: ROO or ROI, Maximizing Participation and Investment
Speaker: To be announced
VI. Successes and Failures: Learning from Experience. An Outlook of the Events Industry
Speaker: Mr. Leonardo R. Garcia, Jr. D.B.A.
CPM, Asia-Pacific, Dean, SPACE
College of St. Benilde-DLSU
VII. Round Table Discussion (Peer-to-Peer)
10 TOPICS
Topics for the Round Table Discussion:
· Proprietary / In-house Events · BUZZ: Events to PR · Planning and Budgeting · Working with Suppliers and Event Management Firm · The Value of Trade Show and Exhibit · Events, Promotions and Attendance · Career in Event Management · Choosing the Right Venue: Site Selection · Exhibit Design: Standing Out from the Crowd · Corporate Event Manager Concept: Getting the Approval of Management
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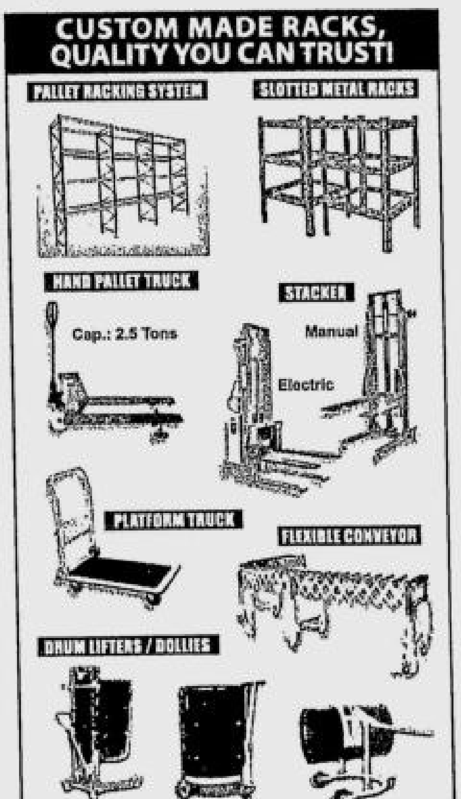
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To Launch Townhouse Project in Manila

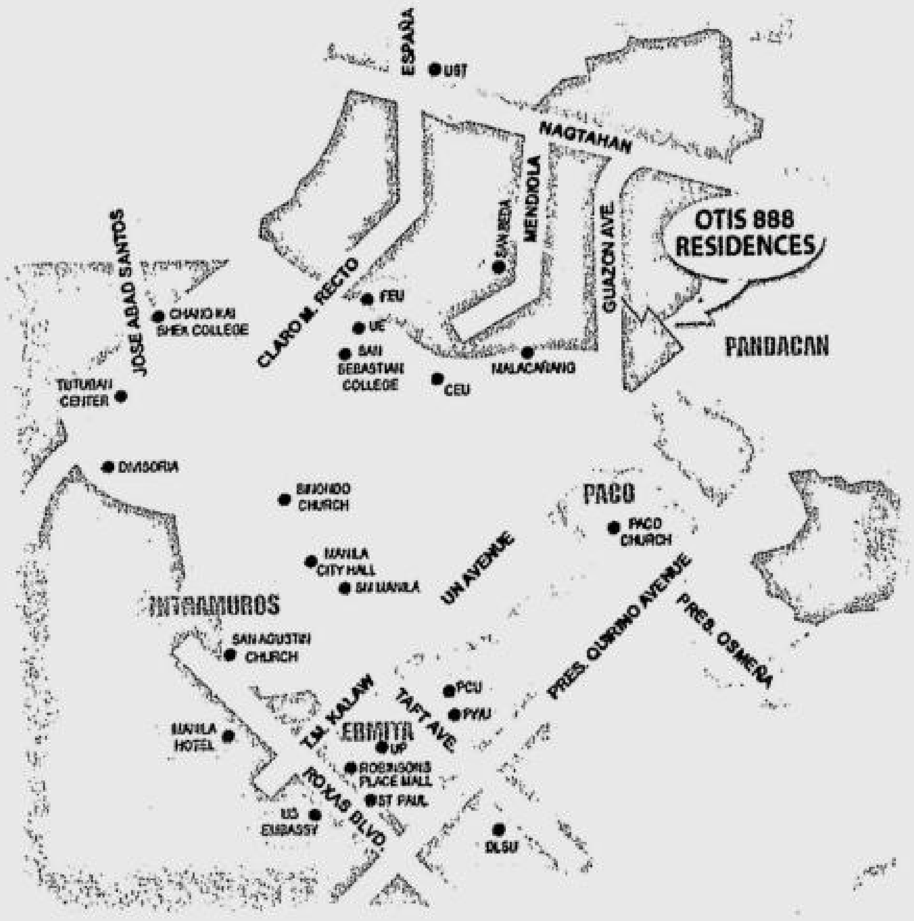
Robinsons Land Corp. (RLC), is planning to launch this April an upscale townhouse residential development, **Otis 888 Residences**, at its recently acquired 4-hectare property located along Otis Road, Manila.

Otis 888 Residences will be a 215-unit upscale development which will primarily cater to the Filipino-Chinese living in the Binondo Chinatown area. It will consist of a mix of 3-BR and 4-BR units, to suit the discerning tastes and need for wider space and greeneries of its target clientele. Units range from P6.5 million and up, with floor areas of 138, 168 and 188 square meters.

Its strategic location of being 2 kilometers or less than 10 minutes away from the Binondo area offers a refreshing alternative for upscale living for Fil-Chinese. Adding comfort is its close proximity to nearby schools like St. Peters, St. Jude, Chiang Kai Shek, Uno, De La Salle-Taft, Malayan High School of Science, St. Stephen, UST and San Beda.

Considered as one of the few remaining premium properties this side of Manila, the site of Otis 888 Residences offers a promising new lifestyle for a privileged few. The gated community will welcome residents to sprawling amenities area with swimming pool, jogging paths, a function room and fitness area. All units will have an interior pocket garden and most corner units will have a separate strip garden to maximize breathing space.

RLC-High-Rise Buildings Division GM, Danilo E. Ignacio said, "Otis 888 Residences aims to address the growing needs of those expanding families in Binondo who require bigger living space."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He added, "A hectare of the property has been allocated for the development of a lifestyle mall which is planned to house a supermarket as well as a mix of retail, dining and service outlets. The mall and the nearby hospitals, schools and other commercial establishments will afford residents easy and safer access to basic needs."

Recently, RLC also bought the 9.3-hectare Jardine Davies property in Merville which the property giant envisions to be a mixed used development composed of several residential thematic enclaves. The property is located between Bicutan and Nichols Interchange.

Robinsons Land Corporation is the real-estate arm of JG Summit Holdings, Inc., (JGSHI), one of the country's largest conglomerates with diverse interest in branded consumers foods, agro-industrial and commodity food products, textile, telecommunications, petrochemicals, air transportation and financial services.

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BSP to extend aid to battered exporters

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS is prepared to extend aid to exporters now reeling from the peso's recent gains, urging them to protect themselves from currency fluctuations by using hedging mechanisms.

In a forum with exporters yesterday, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the monetary institution is prepared to put up a fresh fund to help exporters better compete in the offshore markets by upgrading the quality of their products.

The industry has proposed an assistance fund worth P500 million.

"We're open to considering the establishment of an export promotion fund, but we have to come up with a program," Tetangco said. "We're now talking with the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry)."

According to the BSP chief, factors that are beyond the control of monetary authorities, have been dragging down the greenback, and jacking up regional currencies.

During the forum with the Monetary Board, representatives from small and medium exporters warned that unless the peso falls back to the 53:$1 level, many of the traders would be forced to fold up their businesses and lay off many workers in the provinces.

Tetangco told the exporters that they would have to "try and learn how to hedge."

Hedging refers to the use of various financial tools such as currency derivatives—whose values are based on the values of underlying goods or indices—to soften the impact of exchange rate volatility.

The BSP has a P10-million financial support fund for the promotion export products abroad. Tetangco said the institution would also consider another fund to further assist the sector.

The BSP chief added the banking regulator was also promoting small and medium enterprises through microfinance lending.

The BSP expects a softer growth of 8 percent in export earnings for this year, as against earlier expectations of 10 percent.

Likewise, imports are seen to post a slower growth of 9 percent versus the earlier forecast of 11 percent.

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From belt-tightening, focus shifts to prudent spending

By Michelle V. Remo

NATIONAL TREASURER OMAR Cruz said the government has shifted its fiscal strategy toward maximizing its spending limits to help pump-prime the economy, saying the 4.8-percent gross domestic product growth last year barely trickled down to the poor.

While the Arroyo administration last year undertook belt-tightening measures to reduce its budget deficit, Cruz said economic officials have agreed that this time around, the government should give due attention to the need to pump-prime.

He said the government is now encouraged to make full use of the proposed P1.09-trillion budget for the full year, instead of restricting spending.

"Even if we increase revenue collection, the goal of increasing economic growth is muted if spending is low," Cruz told reporters in a briefing.

Finance officials have said that after the Arroyo administration have arrested the trend of increasing budget deficits, the government now has the flexibility to spend more.

Officials noted that part of the proceeds of the various revenue-enhancement measures are intended not only to reduce the budget deficit but also to increase spending on infrastructure and basic services.

Cruz echoed the earlier statement of Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, who said the economy should grow at least 7 percent to make the poor benefit from the economic growth.

He said that the Arroyo administration remains committed to improve its fiscal position. But officials have also agreed that the task should be accomplished through higher revenues instead of lower spending.

He said the Development Budget Coordination Committee, an inter-agency body tasked with setting economic policies and targets, agreed that the spending program for this year should be fully utilized.

Atlas acquires $5-M loan from affiliate to fund nickel project

By Christine A. Gaylican

MINING COMPANY ATLAS CONSOLIDATED Mining & Development Corp. has secured a three-year, $5-million loan from Toledo Mining Corp. to partly fund a nickel project in Palawan.

Toledo Mining, a nickel mining company listed on the London Stock Exchange and an affiliate of Atlas, operates the Berong nickel project, a 10,659-hectare mining claim in Palawan.

The nickel mine has an indicated resource of 275 million metric tons at 1.3 percent nickel, and 0.074 percent cobalt at 0.9 percent nickel cutoff, that makes it one of the largest unexploited nickel laterite deposits in the world, Atlas said.

Development of the mine is reported to be nearly complete. A trial shipment from the mining project is scheduled for the middle of this year.

The loan carries a 10-percent annual interest rate and it is convertible to shares in Atlas at a par value of P10. The loan is also secured by Atlas's share in the earnings of the Berong nickel project.

Atlas owns around 35 percent of the Berong project.

Atlas is also undertaking the development of another project in Cebu. Company officials said that initial repair work at the mining site of another affiliate, Carmen Copper Corp., was ahead of schedule. The work was completed in October 2005.

Atlas earlier said it was planning to offer shares of Carmen Copper to the public before the year ends.

The company hopes that, with the initial public offering, it will be able to raise about half of the $150 million Atlas needs to rehabilitate copper mines in Cebu.

The Cebu operations had been suspended in 1994.

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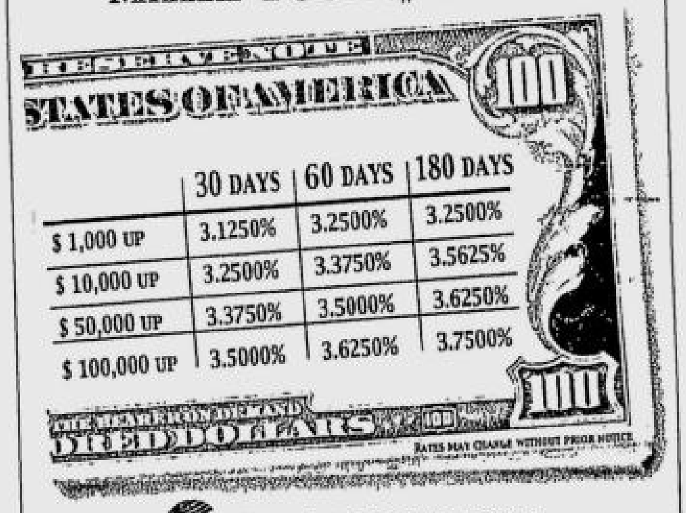

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LOT 2 - OFFICE SUPPLIES FOR LOWER COURTS (PROVINCES)	P 37,846,179.43	Current Appropriations for the lower courts (CY-2006)

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FOR LOT 1 AND 2:

I. PRE-BID CONFERENCE

The pre-bid conference will be held on:

Date: **03 May 2006, Wednesday**
Venue: Conference Room (Ground Floor) Centennial Building, Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Malate, Manila
Time: 1:00 p.m. (for lot 1)
2:00 p.m. (for lot 2)

II. SUBMISSION OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND OPENING OF BIDS

The eligibility requirements of prospective bidders must be personally submitted by the duly authorized representative, and the bids will be opened, thereafter, in the presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives, to be held on:

Date: **17 May 2006, Wednesday**
Venue: Training Room Center (Ground Floor) Centennial building, Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Malate, Manila
Time: 1:00 p.m. (for lot 1)
2:00 p.m. (for lot 2)

Prospective bidders must not be related to the head of the procuring entity or any member of the Committee on Bids or its Secretariat either by consanguinity or affinity up to the third civil degree.

Interested bidders may secure eligibility requirements and bid documents from **The Secretariat, Committee on Bids, Property Division, 3rd Floor Annex Building, Supreme Court**, after payment of a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00) each for LOT 1 and LOT 2**, prior to the conduct of pre-bid conference. For additional information, the bidders may contact the Secretariat, **Ms. Norma C. Josue at tel. no. 5266419.**

The Committee on Bids reserves the right to: 1) reject any or all bids, 2) waive any defects or informalities therein, 3) or accept any bid/s or offer/s which it may consider to be most advantageous and beneficial to the government.

18 April 2006

(Sgd.) JOSE P. PEREZ
Chairman

(PDI—April 19 & 26, 2006)

(Almost) No room at the inn

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IF MAKATI SHANGRI-LA GENERAL manager Jarlath Lynch seems to have an extra spring in his steps these days, it is because his hotel has been enjoying occupancy rates similar to and even eclipsing Hong Kong industry standards.

Despite the coup scare and the Makati rallies, the average occupancy rates in Shangri-La and five other deluxe hotels in the country's premiere city went past 90 percent in February.

Shangri-La easily led the group, with 94 percent of its 699 rooms and suites all but sold out for that month.

Hong Kong hotels registered an average of 86-percent occupancy rate for the same month, although this represented the industry average across-all-hotel categories.

Still, the Makati Shangri-La's 94 percent was clearly way ahead of the 91 percent for the popular Yau Ma Tei/Mongkok's districts, which host Hong Kong's industry-leading hotels.

The higher occupancy rate was achieved despite a 7-percent average increase for Shangri-La corporate clients starting this year, and all the more remarkable considering that the hotel's occupancy rate for the first quarter last year was only 83.5 percent.

Mirroring the Shangri-La's fortune, the Renaissance Makati, controlled by Hong Kong real estate tycoon Cheng Yu-tung, posted a 91.65-percent occupancy rate for February despite a 4-percent increase in room charges imposed beginning 2006, said Renaissance spokesperson Monique Trinidad-Toda.

Opened in 1994 before the Asian currency crisis drained tourism traffic, the Renaissance even registered "historic high" earnings last year, said Trinidad-Toda, declining to elaborate.

Yap got it flippin'

FELIPE YAP, the Lepanto Consolidated chair, was in an ebullient mood during Monday's shareholders' meeting, buoyed not only by historic high metal prices but also by having apparently overcome boardroom opposition from the Metrobank Group.

Not only is Lepanto set to make money this year and finally reopen its long-shuttered industry-leading copper mine, Metrobank's representation in the board has also been reduced from three seats to two.

Stockbroker Ronaldo Salonga stepped down from the board, leaving TV host Ricardo "Dong" Puno Jr. and fellow lawyer Felicitas Aquino-Arroyo, the better half of Sen. Joker Arroyo, to represent the Metrobank Group in the Lepanto board.

Yap refused to discuss the so-called Metrobank issue, but apparently taipan George Ty, whose holdings initially entitled his group to 2.4 board representation, was reduced after his group declined to subscribe to the recent stock-rights offering.

According to the grapevine, Yap henceforth mopped up the bulk of the Metrobank allocation, which proved to be a costly error for Metrobank since Lepanto A and B share prices zoomed thereafter from the 20-22-centavo territory to a post-rights 40s level.

Heard through the grapevine

THE LA SALLE Greenhills president, Bernard Oca, is being transferred to Balanga, Bataan, next school year, where the La Sallite brother could presumably teach haciendero boys and farm kids not only taekwando but also the nuances of Christian morality.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Japan aid eyed for Clark airport study

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL AGAIN rely on the generosity of the government of Japan for the development of the country's next generation international airport despite the transportation department's present troubles with a major Japanese contractor.

Speaking to reporters recently, a ranking official of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) said the government has formally asked the state-run Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) to fund a feasibility study on a proposed replacement for the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia).

Specifically, Transportation Assistant Secretary Robert R. Castañares said an in-depth evaluation was needed to determine once and for all the viability of proposals to make the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport the country's air transportation hub by 2015.

"These feasibility studies are expensive so we've asked Jica if they can study a grant," he said.

Castañares said that a feasibility as comprehensive as the one envisioned by transportation authorities would cost anywhere from P100 million to P150 million, and would put a strain on the DOTC's relatively limited funds already earmarked for other projects.

The official said he was optimistic on getting a favorable response from the Japanese agency, which is responsible for doling out overseas development assistance funding.

"They already informed us that they'll consider it," he said.

Castañares said the planned transfer of major airline and air cargo operations to the former US air base in Pampanga was necessary because of the congestion in Naia.

"Besides, Naia can't accommodate newer aircraft like the [Airbus] A380," he said.

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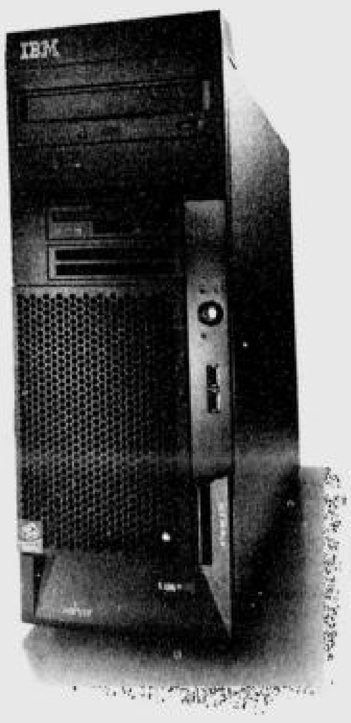

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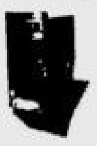

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From death ward to a true healing facility

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

UP UNTIL ABOUT THREE years ago, many of the children who were taken to the pediatric intensive care unit of the Ospital ng Maynila did not leave the room alive.

The sick children's already slim chances of survival became even slimmer due to the high incidence of infection brought on by severe lack of facilities.

The paint on the beds was peeling, the floors were a patchwork of tiles, and the ceilings bore the ugly marks of water leaks.

Nothing to work with

Residents and nurses on duty even had to crudely fashion neo-natal respirators out of cut-up water gallons to fit the babies' heads. They had nothing else to work with.

But visit the ICU today and it presents a vastly different picture.

The beds are now made of stainless steel, the floors are rubberized, the windows have curtains, and the walls are painted with pictures to help along sick children on their road to recovery.

Also, cases of infection that have long plagued the ICU patients are now down to a minimum.

Nobody could be more proud of the pediatric ICU improvement than the employees of financial consulting firm Punongbayan and Araullo, who financed the improvement by contributing their hard earned money to P&A for a Cause (PAUSE).

The pediatric ICU has been renamed Punongbayan and Araullo ward, in honor of Jose G. Araullo, chair emeritus of P&A.

The ward is just one of the many projects that the employees voluntarily support through PAUSE.

PAUSE projects coordinator Joseph Peter Anthony S. Ayson said P&A for a Cause was formed in November 2002 out of the desire of the employees to be involved in community work, and not be confined to their work in the auditing, accounting and financial consulting profession.

"It is purely voluntary, employees just thought of doing something to give back," Ayson says.

BEFORE: The pediatric ICU ward of the Ospital ng Maynila

AFTER: PAUSE breathes new life into the ICU ward.

Feeding program

In February 2003, PAUSE had its first project, dubbed P&AKAIN, a community feeding program conceptualized by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Under the program, 30 malnourished children from one of the most underprivileged communities in General Trias, Cavite were given hot meals every day for six months to bring up their weight to normal levels.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Encouraged by the success of the first project, PAUSE partnered with more groups and government agencies to reach out to more beneficiaries.

Last year, PAUSE started work on its biggest project to date. Under Project: P&Aaralan, an adopt a school project, a school's infrastructure and utilities will be upgraded, over the next three years.

The work to be done, in coordination with the Philippine Business for Social Progress, will also include the donation of books and other school items that the students will need.

Ambitious project

Ayson says P&Aaralan is an ambitious project. But he is confident that with the employees donating an hour's equivalent of their salary a month to the fund—which is matched by P&A itself—PAUSE will see the project through.

Some 75 percent of P&A's nearly 500 employees contribute to the fund, and a good number do the actual work.

Ayson says it is heartening that many former employees of P&A, especially those who have gone abroad, continue to send money home to contribute to PAUSE.

Francis B. Albalate, partner in charge of PAUSE, says management has thrown its full support behind PAUSE because it is an ideal avenue for P&A to reach out to its community, while it gives employees another reason to be proud of themselves and the company.

"PAUSE helps motivate them because they know that the company is not just about profit or clients," Albalate says.

In helping others, they ultimately help themselves.

Marketing Institute of the Philippines
The education and training arm of the
PHILIPPINE MARKETING ASSOCIATION

presents a seminar on

Brand Marketing
(The Basics of Brand Marketing)

April 28, 2006, Friday
8:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Dusit Hotel Nikko, Makati

The concept of Brand Marketing has gone into an evolutionary process ever since it was introduced by Procter & Gamble in 1972. Several multinational companies introduced their own versions at various stages and the concept has been modified to adapt to the individual company's working environment and management style. This seminar will provide the participants with the essential working skills required in the brand marketing job.

Target Participants
This seminar is suites for new recruits in the brand marketing job or those who may already be doing a brand marketing function, but still has no extensive job orientation. Managers coming from brand-related field i.e. sales, advertising, promotions, media and public relations as well as undergraduate or faculty handling a brand marketing course will likewise benefit from this seminar.

Seminar Objectives
At the end of this seminar on **Brand Marketing,** participants will learn the key essentials of the brand marketing function. The following key functional tasks will be dealt extensively: An introduction to Brand Marketing, Crafting the Brand Personality, Brand Strategies that lead to Success, Understanding Brand Research and Measurement and Revitalizing and Managing Brands Over Time.

Methodology
Lectures, exercises, plus the brand marketing plan project will equip participants with the right job orientation. Hands-on practitioners should be able to share pragmatic insights about brand marketing.

SEMINAR PROGRAM

Day 1 – April 28, 2006 (Friday)
Introductory Session – 8:00 – 9:00 AM

Session Chair: Mr. Hermie J. del Rosario

Session 1 – 9:00AM – 10:00AM
Introduction to Brand Marketing
Defines the context of strategic brand marketing by taking the participants through a historical eview o branding, by defining what a brand is why brands matter, how anything can be branded and what customer-based brand equity is all about.

Session 2 – 10:00AM – 11:00AM
Understanding Brand Research and Measurement
Exposes the participants to multiple marketing research measures that can help brand managers understand what is happening to their brands.

Session 3 – 11:00AM - 12:00NN
Crafting The Brand Personality
One important aspect of the brand is its personality as reflected in the associations that consumers hold toward the brand.

12:00NN – 1:00PM - LUNCH

Session 4 – 1:00PM – 2:00PM
Brand Strategies That Lead to Success
This session provides the participants with insights on How best to design branding strategies.

Session 5 – 2:00PM – 3:00PM
Revitalizing and Managing Brand Over Time
One of the challenges in managing brands is the many changes that occur in the marketing environment.

3:00PM – 4:00PM – WORKSHOP

4:00PM – 6:00PM – PRESENTATIOIN OF CASES/ SUMMATION

Registration Fee:
PMA Member - Php 5,500.00
Non-PMA Member - Php 6,500.00

For inquiries please call the Philippine Marketing Association Secretariat at tel. Nos. 636-1451; 638-7700; 634-5722; 634-4890 look for Ms. Lydia Marinas or e-mail: marinaslydia@yahoo.com; philmarketing@pldtdsl.net

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Interest rates seen rising this year

Favorable inflation expected to result in rates softening in '07

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT IS BRACING FOR A SLIGHT increase in interest rates based on the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rates this year.

By next year, the rates are seen to ease to below 6 percent.

The latest macro-economic assumptions used by the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee indicated a possible rise in the average 91-day T-bill rate this year to 6.8-7.4 percent from last year's actual average of 6.358 percent and 7.3 percent in 2004, official documents showed.

But by next year, the 91-day T-bill rates are seen softening to 4.8-5.5 percent with the expected favorable inflation rate regime and improvements in the government's fiscal position.

Starting 2008, when the government is expected to have wiped out its deficits, the 91-day T-bill rates were seen to slow down to 4.5-5.5 percent.

The forecasts assumed that the peso would range from 51 to 53 against the US dollar and that inflation rate would taper off starting 2007 after shrugging off the impact of the 2 percentage hike in the value added tax rate this year.

The slightly higher interest rate assumption for this year already took into consideration pressures from external markets, particularly the US Federal Reserve's continued tightening of overnight rates.

Although the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has so far kept its interest rates steady since October last year, its top officials are not ruling out a possible hike for the rest of the year given continuing threats to inflation.

The slowdown in interest rates by next year, in turn, was seen to perk up the appetite of investors to borrow for business expansion. Borrowers will tend to take advantage of the ample domestic liquidity in the financial system.

In the meantime, the BSP expects the country's inflation rate easing to 4.3-5 percent by next year despite risks of unabated rise in global oil prices. Its latest official forecasts indicated a possible slowdown to the inflation target range of 4-5 percent starting 2007, alongside expectations of a stable exchange rate and softening domestic interest rates.

For this year, the latest inflation rate projection adopted by the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee is a range of 7.3-7.9 percent, overshooting the target range of 4-5 percent.

Tariff proposal for crude, refined oil products opposed

By Abigail L. Ho

A TARIFF DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN CRUDE and refined petroleum products could kill small oil players and hurt the entire downstream oil industry, an industry executive said.

Flying V chair and president Ramon Villavicencio said the government, particularly the Department of Energy, should recognize the fact that small oil players, while still unable to match their bigger counterparts, were still among "the prime movers of the Philippine economy."

Villavicencio was reacting to proposals of certain quarters to impose a tariff differential between crude and refined petroleum products to encourage continued operations of and increased investments in refineries in the country.

He said the proposal was not fair as this would result in the death of independent oil firms.

"The tariff differential will not level the playing field between the refiners and the small oil players. This could mean the death of independent oil companies," he said.

He said that even the Supreme Court had seen the error of adopting a tariff differential.

The first downstream oil industry deregulation law, RA 8180 signed in 1996, provided a 4-percent tariff differential between crude and finished products. The high court struck the law down because of that provision.

The current oil deregulation law, RA 8479 signed in 1998, does not mandate any tariff differential, putting refiners and pure finished product importers on equal footing in terms of tariffs.

"The government, especially the DOE, should respect the SC decision and help protect the small oil players," Villavicencio said. "It's probably best if they can come up with a new formula that will be good for the industry, whether a big or a small player."

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla earlier said the government was willing to explore the possibility of instituting a tariff differential between refiners and pure importers.

However, he said a careful study of the legal implications of such a move would have to be done, considering how the Supreme Court reacted when such a provision was included in the first downstream oil deregulation law.

The Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association said it would oppose any move to put in place a tariff differential between crude and refined petroleum products.

Australian school offering Entrepreneurial MBA - at IAME

Entrepreneurship Institute Australia (EIA), in recognition of the entrepreneurial talent of the Filipino as shown by the emergence of increasing numbers of Filipino billionaires in Forbes magazine's list of the world's wealthiest individuals, is offering a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Entrepreneurship Management at the International Academy of Management and Economics (IAME [eye-aim]).

Participants will use the action-oriented learning approach to maximise their learning by applying theory to practice in the completion of their assignments.

Each subject involves the presentation of a body of knowledge by faculty with professional experience in the management of multinational corporations and entrepreneurial ventures. The IAME facilitators trained by EIA, all hold post-graduate degrees in the areas that they handle from premiere universities.

The faculty boasts of a total management and teaching experience of 220 years and total resources of no less than P8.5 billion.

Seats in programme are limited to 25. Five reservations were already made at pre-media announcement phase. In preparation of the May commencement of the programme, information sessions are scheduled in April. Interested parties may contact the Admissions Officer Loren Simbulan at 896-2355; E-mail: chairman@iame.edu.ph or testing@iame.edu.ph; Website: www.iame.edu.ph; Mobile: (0920) 2142340 or visit IAME (eye-aim) at Ayala Avenue Extension, turn left, off 1061 Metropolitan Avenue, Makati City.

ADVT

Lepanto sees 70% rise in gold output

By Christine A. Gaylican

LEPANTO CONSOLIDATED MINING Co. is optimistic it would be able to post a 70 percent increase in its gold production and resume its copper operations this year.

With its labor problems now over, the company expects to produce between 22,000 and 24,000 ounces of gold per quarter, Lepanto president and COO Bryan U. Yap said in the company's stockholders meeting Monday.

In 2005, Lepanto produced 55,749 ounces of gold.

Yap said the projected quarterly output could raise for the company P300 million in net income this year.

In the first quarter, Lepanto produced 15,500 ounces of gold and 20,000 ounces of silver, he said.

Due to the rising world market prices, Yap said the company would soon revive its copper operations. A team tapped by the firm is evaluating copper resources in its Enargite and Victoria areas.

For the copper project, Lepanto is in talks with prospective partners, including Ivanhoe Mines, Anglo-American Holdings Plc. and Zijin Mining Group Company Ltd.

Yap said the company would need a foreign partner to develop the Far Southeast Project in Mankayan, Benguet which was estimated to require $400 million in investments.

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The programme comprises 12 subjects and is normally delivered during twelve (12) weekend workshops spread over twelve (12) months.

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God has you in his keeping; we have you in our hearts...

IN LOVING MEMORY

On the **Third Death Anniversary** of

JOCELYN ROJAS ABESAMIS

Who passed on the Eternal Life on April 19, 2003

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass shall be offered today, April 19, 2006, at the following Churches:

Garden of Love, *Loyola Memorial Park* .... 5:00 p.m. Mass
Marikina City
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish .... 6:45 a.m.
Legaspi St., Project 4, Quezon City
Monastery of St. Clare .... 6:00 a.m.
Katipunan Road, Quezon City
Sta. Maria dela Strada .... 6:00 a.m.
Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish .... 6:30 a.m.
13th Ave., Quezon City
St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish .... 7:30 a.m.
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Transfiguration of Our Lord Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
18th Avenue, Quezon City
St. Francis of Assisi Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
Peñaranda, Nueva Ecija (April 17 & 20)
La Resurreccion Parish .... 6:00 a.m.
Victoria, Laguna
Ubanon Church .... 5:00 p.m.
Ubanon, Catbalogan, Samar
San Bartolomew Church .... 5:30 a.m.
Catbalogan, Samar

We, her husband, **Justice Bernardo P. Abesamis**; sons, **Atty. Ferdie, Atty. Edmund, Engr. Bernardo, Jr., Atty. Al.** and Quezon City Councilor **Rommel**; daughters **Moonyeen Abesamis-Ayache** (†) and **Dr. Gigi Abesamis-Recasata**; daughters-in-law, **Josie, Janet, Miles, Lowie** and **Bernadette**; sons-in-law, **Rudy Ayache** and **Dr. Jay Recasata**; grandchildren, **A-jay & Jay-B**; **Jeric, Justin, Joshua & Juliano**; **Gideon & Carlos**; **Therese, Miggy & Katy**; **Micah**; **Nicco, Nikki, Nathan & Neo**; brother, **Judge Pablito M. Rojas**, sisters, **Dr. Mila Rojas-Navarette** and **Tessie R. Yulo**; nephews and nieces, request readers, relatives and friends to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

ENGR. ARTURO P. AQUITANIA

of San Diego, California, USA
and born in Rosario, La Union, Philippines
on February 10, 1932,
peacefully joined his Creator on February 20, 2006.

His bereaved wife, **Corazon**; children **Edward, Liza** and **Irving**; grandchildren **Kimee** and **Jonjon**, and all his relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His ashes will be flown in from the U.S. on Monday, April 17, 2006 and will be in the Resurrection Chapel, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church (Claret Church), Mahinhin St., UP Village, Quezon City on Friday, April 21, 2006 at 1:00 p.m.

Interment will be on Saturday, April 22, after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Manuel G. Garcellano

husband of the late Emma E. Garcellano
passed into the light on April 17, 2006.

He is remembered with love by his children and their spouses, **Elsie, Edel** and **Chato, Efren, Lem** and **Espie**, and **Grace** and **GJ**; **Noriet** and other nieces and nephews; grandchildren **Cha-cha** and **Dindo, Ochelle, Ivy, Via** and **Third, Rhissa** and **Lyra, Laya** and **RF, Manuel, Ute, Anto**, and **Diday**, and **Xaris** and **Jason**.

His remains will stay at The St. Peter Memorial Chapels on Quezon Avenue in Quezon City until 2 p.m. of April 19. Cremation will follow at The Eternal Gardens in Caloocan City.

The wake will be held at his residence on 49 Elbo Street, Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, starting on April 20.

Interment is set on April 23.

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

Miguel Moran Y Roxas

Passed into the light of our Lord on April 5, 2006 in Redondo Beach, California.

His cremated remains will arrive in the Philippines on April 20, 2006 and will lie in state at the Capilla de la Virgen, Santuario de San Antonio Parish, Forbes Park, Makati City.

A Memorial Service will be held at 11 a.m. on April 20, 2006. Interment will be on the same day after the 4:00 p.m. Mass.

"The Lord giveth, The Lord taketh away. Blessed Be The Lord."

JOSE MARIA LIMJUCO NOTARIO

"Jon-Jon"

October 21, 1975 - April 16, 2006

His loving parents, **Roy** and **Maridel**; sisters, **Cielo** and **Loucelle**; nephews, **Jao** and **Miklosh**; nieces, **Nonique** and **Audrey**; **Lola Fining**; beloved **Rina** and **Mark**; relatives and friends request the readers to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at The Good Shepherd Cathedral, Fairview, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Cremation will be on Friday, April 21, 2006 at the Loyola Memorial Park Crematorium, Marikina City. There will be a Mass at The Good Shepherd Cathedral at 9:00 a.m. on Friday before proceeding to Loyola Memorial Park.

Atty. Roberto B. Lugue

Peacefully joined his Creator on April 16, 2006 at the age of 68.

His loving wife **Norma**; children **Manolo & Julie, Rowena & Tito, Michael, Patrick** and **Cookie, Ambet, Caloy, Marlon**; grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills East.

Interment will be on April 21, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. at Grayline Memorial Park, Bulaon, San Fernando, Pampanga after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Santuario de San Jose.

ALBERTO ILOG SORIANO

Died in the Grace of our Lord on April 17, 2006 at the age of 57.

His beloved wife **Elizabeth**; son **Exequiel**; daughters **Mary Rose** and **Jilsen Jan**; grandchildren **Marie Emilia, Alyssa Kathleen** and **Danica**; brothers & sister, brother-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to join them in prayer for his eternal repose in heaven.

His remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapel, Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City on April 22, 2006 after the 9:00 AM Mass at the Loyola Memorial Chapel.

Service by Malabed Funeral Homes.

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NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION DATE & TIME	INTERMENT/CREMATION PLACE
ESTER T. LAVARES	Superior Chapel, Q.C.	April 20, 2006/9:00 AM	Loyola Mem. Park, Mkna
TIU TIONG IU	Chapel D, Q.C.	April 21, 2006	Eternal Gardens Memorial Park
JOSE SIMPLICIO NAEL JR.	Chapel C-10, Q.C.	April 19, 2006/8:00 AM	Holy Cross Memorial Park

"... absent from the body to be present with the Lord" 2 Corinthians 5:8

More Classified Ads on Pages A20, A21, B2, B4, B9 & B11

CLASSIFIEDS

GARMA CLINIC VD SPECIALIST
VD GONORRHEA, WARTS SYPHILIS, STD, HERPES
ADULT CIRCUMCISION Painless, Bloodless
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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 18, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	27,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	34.5	34.5	34	34	102,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	61	62	61	62	2,083,900
China Banking Corp.	760	760	750	750	2,050
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	18	18	18	18	3,000
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.49	0.49	9,600,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	70	72	70	71	74,700
International Exch. Bank	31	31	31	31	5,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	38.5	39	38	39	140,200
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	52	52	52	52	300
Philippine National Bank	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	2,400
Phil. Savings Bank	38.5	38.5	37	38	22,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.25	14.25	25,000
Security Bank Corp.	46.5	47	46	47	97,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	38.5	40	38.5	39	8,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	27.5	28	27.5	28	5,300
Manulife Financial Corp.	3220	3250	3220	3250	1,150
Pci Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	0.99	0.99	50,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	185	185	185	185	100
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2140	2145	2140	2145	420
Ivantage Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.16	1.18	7,722,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	44.5	44.5	44.5	44.5	442,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45.5	46	45	45.5	835,100
Manila Electric Co. A	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	14,600
Manila Electric Co. B	20	20	19.75	20	236,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.4	2,031,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.4	4.35	4.4	3,746,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.2	0.2	730,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.99	370,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	34,000
CADP Group Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	3,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20	20	19.5	19.5	243,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35.5	35.5	35.5	35.5	286,300
Pancake House Inc.	4	4	4	4	14,000
San Miguel Pure Foods A	58	58	58	58	100
RFM Corp.	0.76	0.79	0.76	0.79	530,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.75	2.9	2.75	2.85	2,096,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	220,000
San Miguel Corp. A	59.5	60	59	60	139,700
San Miguel Corp. B	78.5	79	78.5	79	206,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19	19.75	19	19.5	2,427,600
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.32	2,860,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.48	1.54	1.48	1.52	21,363,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.55	4.4	4.55	846,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	260,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.0725	0.07	0.07	6,400,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	2,600,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	7,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.42	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.009	0.008	0.008	384,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0085	0.011	0.0085	0.0095	33,000,000
Ayala Corp.	352.5	352.5	347.5	352.5	102,010
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	640,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	11,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.7	501,000
APC Group Inc.	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.21	6,450,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.009	0.008	0.008	286,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1	1.04	0.95	0.97	3,830,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	17,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.32	1.1	1.1	227,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.75	0.75	0.7	0.7	330,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.97	2,800,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	1,809,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.75	2.8	407,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.28	1.3	1.26	1.28	460,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.8	5.9	377,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	10,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	26,500,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	4,320,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	1,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	120,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.145	0.15	0.145	0.145	1,840,000
SM Investments Corp.	220	220	214	214	294,480
South China Resources Inc.	0.75	0.78	0.75	0.78	420,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.54	0.59	0.54	0.58	210,000
Uniol Res. & Holdings Co.	0.0625	0.0625	0.06	0.06	3,200,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	350,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11.25	11.5	11.25	11.25	28,920,700
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
Bella Corp.	1.3	1.36	1.26	1.3	1,874,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	450,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.88	1.9	1.86	1.86	1,567,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.7	1.7	136,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.205	0.21	0.2	0.205	1,610,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	380,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.66	26,360,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.026	0.028	0.026	0.028	2,100,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.65	0.66	440,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	3,750,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.075	0.08	0.075	0.08	400,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	200,000
Interport Res.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	8,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.006	0.006	0.0055	0.0055	80,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.25	0.25	0.235	0.24	2,080,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27	35,560,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.26	0.26	1,330,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	180,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.6	2	1.6	1.6	120,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8.5	8.6	8.4	8.4	899,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.34	0.35	0.33	0.33	15,460,000
SM Development Corp.	1.56	1.58	1.56	1.58	68,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	8	7.8	8	3,986,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	1,320,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.5	12.75	12.25	12.5	102,500
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	28,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.94	0.95	2,100,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	885	890	885	885	46,680
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3	3	2.95	3	3,423,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1975	1975	1965	1965	240,530
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1,000,000
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	6,800,000
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	50,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	1,500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	3,700,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	50,000
Philweb Corp.	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.024	153,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.44	2.44	2.42	2.42	140,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.75	12	11.5	11.5	402,600
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	30,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.72	1.74	1,063,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	580,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.45	0.49	0.45	0.49	6,380,000
EDUCATION					
IPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	140,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.88	1.94	1.82	1.82	293,000
Paxys Inc.	9.3	9.4	9.2	9.4	1,243,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	3.1	3.45	2.75	2.8	21,615,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	3.15	3.65	2.9	2.9	14,118,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.01	0.011	0.0095	0.01	1,316,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.4	8.7	7.7	7.7	5,225,000
Benguet Corp. A	17	17	12.75	13.75	936,500
Benguet Corp. B	36.5	36.5	36.5	36.5	200
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.6	2.7	2.26	2.26	1,026,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.44	0.46	0.39	0.4	263,010,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.47	0.47	0.42	0.42	81,840,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.031	0.034	0.029	0.03	2,677,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.036	0.037	0.033	0.034	1,181,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.0085	0.009	0.0075	0.008	1,547,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	4.2	4.3	3.8	3.9	13,651,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	4.2	4.3	3.85	3.95	31,339,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28	28	27.5	27.5	541,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.43	0.43	0.39	0.39	1,790,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.5	0.51	0.46	0.46	2,670,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.27	0.27	8,250,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.012	0.01	0.011	2,184,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.013	0.011	0.012	675,300,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.72	0.72	0.68	0.68	1,820,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	450,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	4	4.15	4	4	299,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,000
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	13	13.25	12.75	12.75	264,600

DISCLOSURES

MANILA Mining Corp. has elected Felipe U. Yap, Jose G. Cervantes, Rene F. Chanyungco, Ethelwoldo E. Fernandez, Augusto C. Villaluna, Patrick K. Yap and Bryan U. Yap as directors. Also elected as independent directors were Eduardo B. Bangayan and Patricio L. Lim.

***

LEPANTO Consolidated Mining Co. has elected Felipe U. Yap, Bryan U. Yap, Felicitas Aquino-Arroyo, Jose G. Cervantes, John D. Fairfield, Ricardo V. Puno, Jr. and Cresencio C. Yap as directors. Also elected as independent directors were Ray C. Espinosa and Wilfrido C. Tecson.

***

THE ANNUAL stockholders' meeting of **First Metro Investment Corp.** originally set on April 27 has been rescheduled to May 11, 3 p.m. at the Metrobank Plaza, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 27 are entitled to vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by Kate Pedroso, PDI Research***

Treasury . . .

From page B1

decline in treasury bill rates last Monday.

During Monday's auction for treasury bills, the bellwether 91-day rate dipped by 39.3 basis points to 4.6 percent. The 186- and 364-day bills also recorded lower rates, settling at 5.499 percent and 6.09 percent.

SMPFC posts 11% revenue growth

Poultry, feeds businesses boosted performance in '05

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL PURE FOODS CO. (SMPFC) said its consolidated revenue in 2005 exceeded P50 billion, a growth of 11 percent from 2004 level.

SMPFC, a unit of San Miguel Corp., is involved in the production of of vegetable oils, feeds, flour, poultry, fresh and processed meats and dairy products.

In a report to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), SMPFC said its cost of sales rose 9 percent due to increases in sales volumes and in the prices of raw materials.

Net income, it said, grew 80 percent led by the growth posted by poultry and feeds businesses as well as the company's flour operations. Absolute figures were not disclosed.

Its poultry business rose 7 percent in terms of revenue due to favorable supply-demand conditions, and good selling prices.

The feed business posted an 11-percent growth to P13.9 billion driven by a 13- percent growth in sales volumes.

The flour business sustained profitability with a volume growth of 2 percent last year in spite of a relatively flat industry growth. Revenue rose 5 percent to P5.3 billion last year compared with the previous year.

The Purefoods-Hormel Co. Inc. registered double-digit sales volume and revenue growths of 14 percent and 17 percent respectively. Operating income however declined from last year due to higher raw material prices, and higher fixed costs spending, bulk of which were related to plant-expansion.

Magnolia Inc. posted P4.2 billion in revenue , 15 percent higher than year-ago level partly due to the contribution of new products such as milk and ice cream.

Operating profits of Great Food Solutions, the food service unit of the company and operator of the Smokey's franchise, grew by more than four times from 2004 level. This was due to the transfer of the commissary operations of Monterey to Great Foods in February.

The number of outlets served increased by 147 to 4,108 in 2005 from 3,961 in 2004. Smokey's outlets opened in 2005 hit 46, bringing the total number to 103 by the end of 2005.

UCPB

NOTICE OF DEFERMENT
UCPB SAVINGS BANK, INC.
ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS MEETING

The annual stockholders meeting of UCPB Savings Bank, Inc. scheduled on April 21, 2006 has been deferred until further notice.

(Sgd.) **EDWARD E. MARTIN**
Asst. Corporate Secretary

(PDI—April 19, 2006)

Holcim profit hits ₱1.27B

HOLCIM PHILIPPINES INC., ONE of the country's leading cement makers, said its net income last year dipped 9 percent to P1.27 billion from P1.4 billion in 2004.

In a report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the company said the decline in profit was due to the soft demand for cement last year.

Holcim said the continued rise in fuel prices, the political tension in the country and the lack of infrastructure spending contributeds to lowering of demand for cement.

Demand for cement weakened by 4.3 percent last year from year-ago level.

Holcim said it was able to implement a cost-reduction program that lowered its operating expenses by P354 million. It was also able to increase export volume last year to 1.76 million metric tons from 1.34 million metric tons in 2004.

Revenues increased 6.4 percent to P14.15 billion.

Last year, Holcim paid P2.8 billion of its maturing loans, which reduced interest expenses by P212 million. Last December, the concrete raw meal silo at its Davao plant collapsed, which stopped operations early this year. The incident is currently being investigated. Cement supply in the area is assured by shipping clinker and cement from other Holcim plants in Lugait in Misamis Oriental and Bulacan. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

CURRENCIES

April 18, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.816327	1.000000	51.2810
Japan	Yen	0.006931	0.008490	0.4354
United Kingdom	Pound	1.444571	1.769600	90.7469
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105238	0.128917	6.6110
Switzerland	Franc	0.637805	0.781311	40.0664
Canada	Dollar	0.712887	0.873286	44.7830
Singapore	Dollar	0.509631	0.624298	32.0146
Australia	Dollar	0.602144	0.737626	37.8262
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.166184	2.653576	136.0780
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.217658	0.266631	13.6731
Brunei	Dollar	0.508045	0.622355	31.9150
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000111	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.021510	0.026350	1.3513
UAE	Dirham	0.222256	0.272264	13.9620
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.225000	62.8192
Argentina	Peso	0.265472	0.325203	16.6767
Brazil	Real	0.382892	0.469043	24.0530
Denmark	Kroner	0.134004	0.164155	8.4180
India	Rupee	0.018153	0.022237	1.1403
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.222463	0.272517	13.9749
Mexico	New Peso	0.073903	0.090531	4.6425
New Zealand	Dollar	0.509313	0.623908	31.9946
South Africa	Rand	0.134896	0.165248	8.4741
Korea	Won	0.000854	0.001046	0.0536
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025150	0.030809	1.5799

Coke feels . . .

From page B1

tions of these plants.

It said the restructuring costs amounted to P298 million, adding that manufacturing upgrades were ongoing in other Coca Cola Beverage facilities.

Coca Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc., the bottling arm of San Miguel has 39 manufacturing facilities and some 200 sales offices across the country. CCBPI employs more than 9,000 Filipinos, 80 percent of them outside Metro Manila.

The Coca Cola Beverage Group consists of CCBPI and its two subsidiaries—Cosmos Bottling Corp. and Philippine Beverage Partners Inc. (PhilBev).

"The Philippine carbonated soft drink market remained difficult in 2005 with slower than anticipated growth in consumption levels ushering in a steady decline in the soft drink category. In addition, pricing pressures and competition were unrelenting," SMC wrote in its financial report.

As a result, the Coca-Cola Beverage Group reported an 8-percent drop in volume. Gains in the juice and water businesses were not enough to offset the downturn in the soft drink business as CCBPI deferred price adjustments, SMC said. Sales revenue of the Coca Cola Beverage Group hit P39.8 billion. No comparative figures were provided.

San Miguel also said that cost reduction efforts and improvements in operational efficiencies could not compensate for increases in input costs. Slimmer profit margins resulted in a sharp drop in operating income by 63 percent to P1.17 billion in 2005 from the same period in 2004.

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture
ISO 9001 2000 CERTIFIED

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO REBID

April 18, 2006

The Philippine Carabao Center (PCC), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, invites suppliers/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project described below:

Name of Project	"Sustainable System of Propagation for Superior Genetics Dairy Buffaloes for Smallhold Farmers"
Location	PCC National Gene Pool and Headquarters, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
Brief Description	Supply 500 heads crossbreds (PCxMB) carabaos
Approved Budget for the Contract	P12,500,000.00
Contract Duration	150 calendar days
Delivery Period	60 calendar days

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check as well as the preliminary examination of bids shall use a non-discretionary "pass or fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conferences, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of Republic Act 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations

The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows:

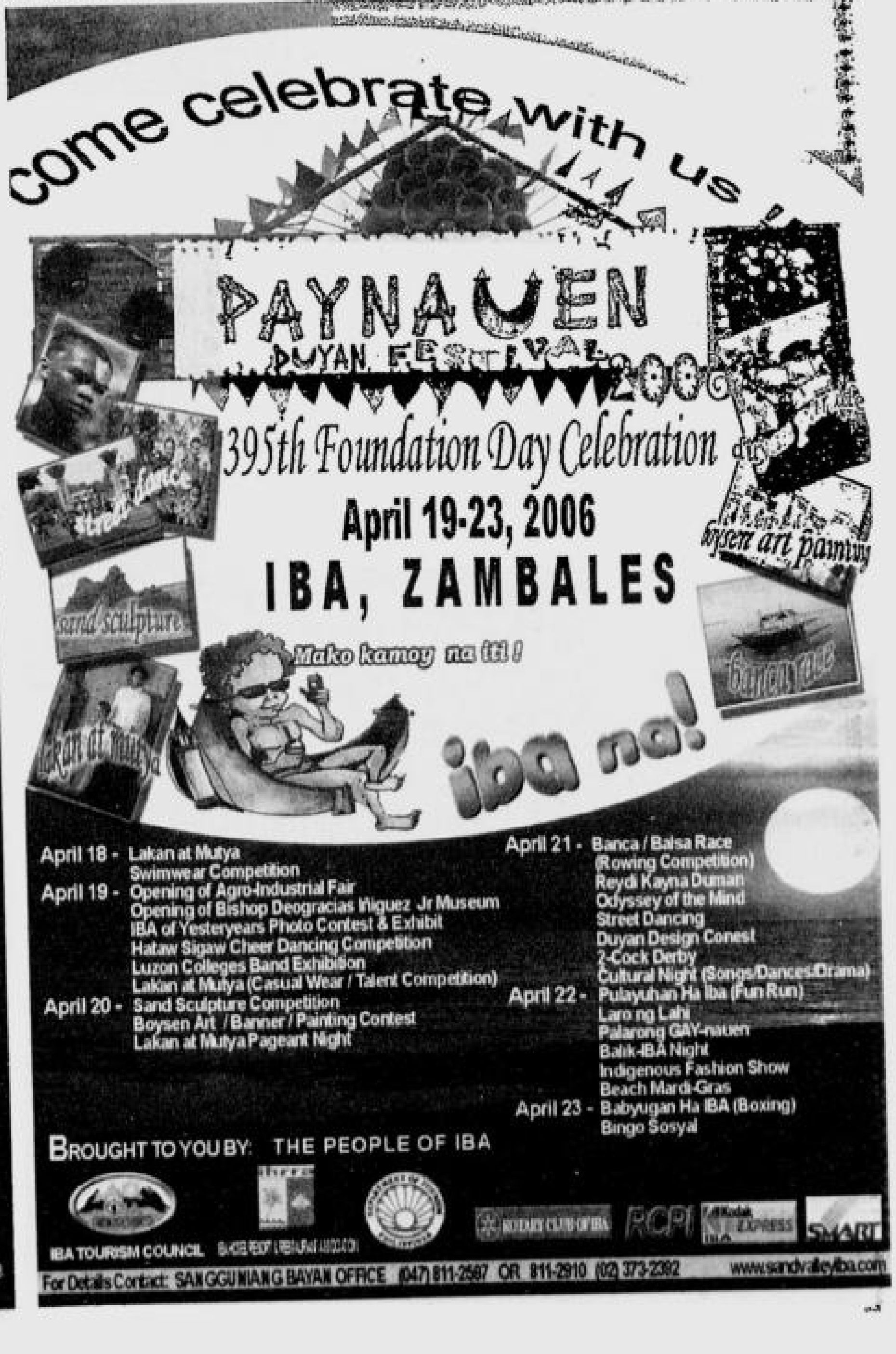
Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	April 24-28, 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference (Madamba Hall PCC Headquarters and Gene Pool, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	May 3, 2006 (2:00 p.m.)
3. Opening of Bids (Madamba Hall PCC Headquarters and Gene Pool, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)	May 17, 2006 (2:00 p.m.)
4. Bid Evaluation	May 18-24, 2006
5. Post-qualification	May 25-31, 2006
6. Notice of Award	15 calendar days after Post Qualification period

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) to the PCC Cashier.

PCC assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bid.

(Sgd.) **EULOGIO M. MONTEALTO**
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 19, 2006)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April 18 - Lakan at Mutya
Swimwear Competition
April 19 - Opening of Agro-Industrial Fair
Opening of Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez Jr Museum
IBA of Yesteryears Photo Contest & Exhibit
Hataw Sigaw Cheer Dancing Competition
Luzon Colleges Band Exhibition
Lakan at Mutya (Casual Wear / Talent Competition)
April 20 - Sand Sculpture Competition
Boysen Art / Banner / Painting Contest
Lakan at Mutya Pageant Night
April 21 - Banca / Balsa Race (Rowing Competition)
Reydi Kayna Duman
Odyssey of the Mind
Street Dancing
Duyan Design Conest
2-Cock Derby
Cultural Night (Songs/Dances/Drama)
April 22 - Pulayuhan Ha Iba (Fun Run)
Laro ng Lahi
Palarong GAY-nauen
Balik-IBA Night
Indigenous Fashion Show
Beach Mardi-Gras
April 23 - Babyugan Ha IBA (Boxing)
Bingo Sosyal

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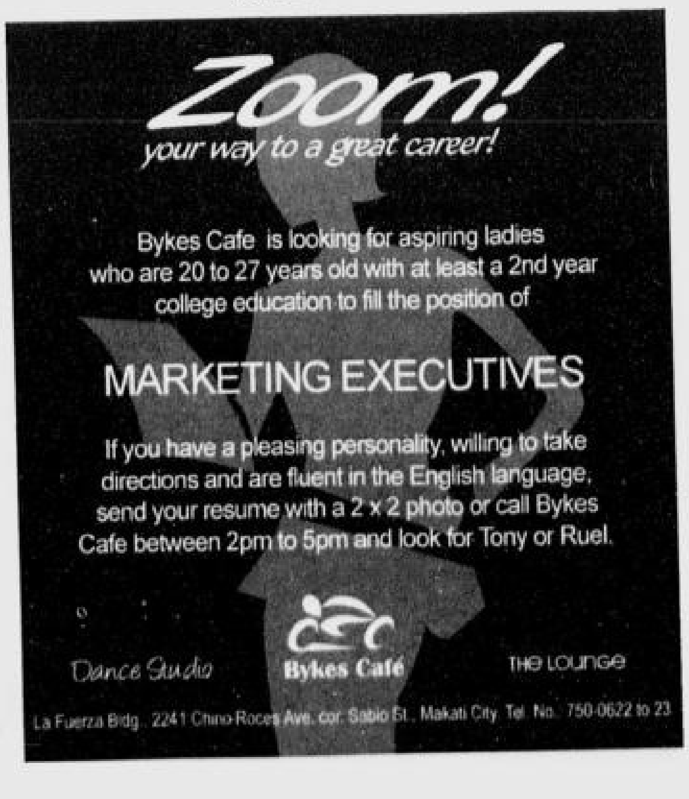
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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Text us your feedback: inquirer mtr name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Motorists warned to stop using recapped tires on long trips

By Tessa R. Salazar

FOR ANY DRIVER WHO HAS been on those long trips to the provinces, the remnants of blown tires and shredded interiors strewn on the highways is a common sight.

And though it may entail mere common sense to conclude that unreliable tires could pose grave danger to motorists and pedestrians alike, the irresistibly cheap price tags for substandard tires do muddle the senses.

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The latest accident figures involving blown tires aren't complete yet as of press time (2005 figures: 42 cases of tire failure on the Skyway alone), but the field personnel at the Land Transportation Office safety education division have seen for themselves how motorists who suffer blowouts at high speeds learn their lessons the hard way and pay a high price—lose either a limb or a life.

The primary culprit in these tragic blowouts has been the recapped tire. "*Kahit na* recapped *tinatakbo nila ng malayo* (Even if the tires are recapped, these are still used on long drives)," said Daisy Jacobo, LTO safety education chief.

According to her, a wornout tire *(nakakalbong gulong)* is another culprit for vehicular accidents.

"Where human lives are at stake, we should be more selective in our choice of equipment and spare parts," said Jacobo. "It's wrong to economize (if that compromises safety)," she added.

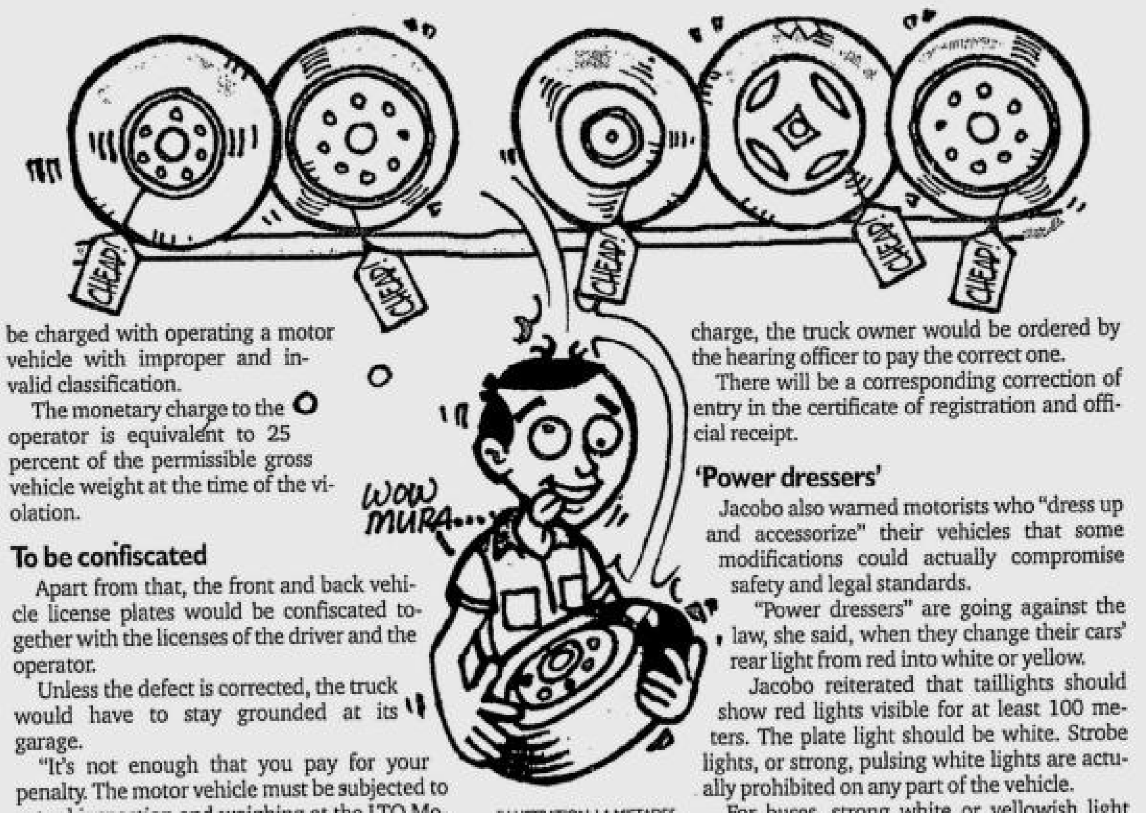
Removing wheels

Reducing two wheels from a 6-wheeler truck to be able to circumvent the truck ban is another cause of traffic accidents.

To reinforce Republic Act 8794 that prohibits overloading, a memorandum circular has been passed outlawing the removal of tandem wheels and prescribing the permissible gross vehicle weight.

Drivers that remove tandem wheels at the rear can now be charged with reckless driving (RA 4136). For operators involved, they could be charged with operating a motor vehicle with improper and invalid classification.

The monetary charge to the operator is equivalent to 25 percent of the permissible gross vehicle weight at the time of the violation.


CHEAP!
CHEAP!
CHEAP!
CHEAP!
CHEAP!
WOW MURA...
ILLUSTRATION: LA MISTADES

To be confiscated

Apart from that, the front and back vehicle license plates would be confiscated together with the licenses of the driver and the operator.

Unless the defect is corrected, the truck would have to stay grounded at its garage.

"It's not enough that you pay for your penalty. The motor vehicle must be subjected to actual inspection and weighing at the LTO Motor Vehicle Inspection Station," Jacobo said.

She added that if it was established that there was an undercollection of the road user's charge, the truck owner would be ordered by the hearing officer to pay the correct one.

There will be a corresponding correction of entry in the certificate of registration and official receipt.

'Power dressers'

Jacobo also warned motorists who "dress up and accessorize" their vehicles that some modifications could actually compromise safety and legal standards.

"Power dressers" are going against the law, she said, when they change their cars' rear light from red into white or yellow.

Jacobo reiterated that taillights should show red lights visible for at least 100 meters. The plate light should be white. Strobe lights, or strong, pulsing white lights are actually prohibited on any part of the vehicle.

For buses, strong white or yellowish light facing backward at the passenger entrances are also prohibited. Passengers climbing aboard can be temporarily blinded by this strong light.

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Reflections

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER, WELL AT LEAST for most of us who have had to return to the front lines of the workday world. Easily a million trips were taken over the last week; under the guise of the penitent on pilgrimage, the Filipino has gone home, to vacation or worse to party, half-naked on some crowded island with white sand beaches. Bible thumping zealot I am not; maybe, I'm just jealous.

What I am a fervent believer in is the concept of efficient transportation, something completely lost on the poor Filipino traveler during the summer holidays and Holy Week in particular. The image of our road networks filled beyond safe capacity is not far from what more than a few of us have probably had to endure over decades of our lemming-like observance of the Lenten trip.

Again, I am referring to the trips during Lent as mindless and inefficient, not the religious barrio fiesta that it is. Make no mistake about it; I do not want to incur the wrath of the Catholic Church, a political organization so influential even the government has to bow to its whims on the death penalty. Last I heard there was some separation of the two and never the twain should meet, especially over matters of governance and state. Oh well, one cannot be a true banana republic if we weren't beholden to the Vatican, now would we?

Reassignment

Maybe we should play the ball back to the government's half on this issue. Why should the declared public holiday coincide with the religious calendar? Most every other public holiday has been moved from its original date of observation; why should Holy Week be exempt from such reassignment.

In fact, why not stagger the implementation of these holidays. Don't laugh, I'm serious. If we the citizens of this country already surrender the right to use private property when we please, like our cars, for the sake of traffic and congestion, then why shouldn't we give up the right to take our holidays at the same time. In the end, the decongestion of our nation's highways should be reason enough to make Holy Week a movable holiday. The stress relief would be phenomenal to say the least.

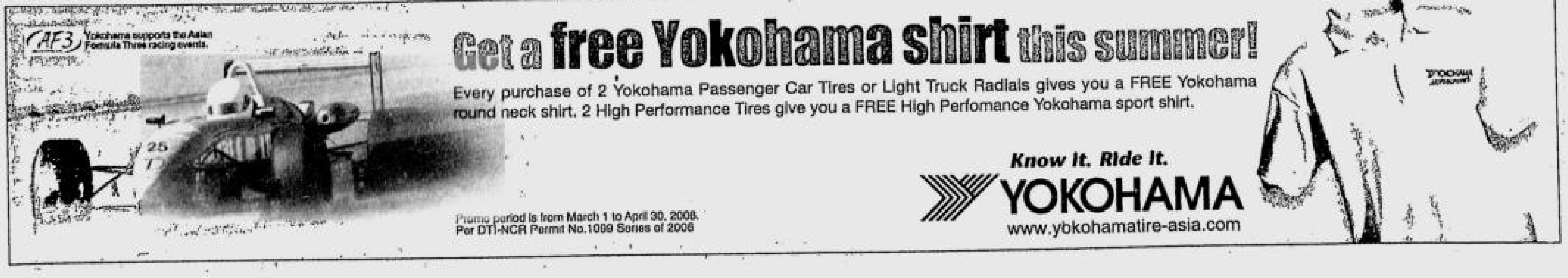
Only the naïve would say that such draconian measure would not meet any sort of resistance. The first and largest obstacle is the Filipino citizenry themselves. While they might echo the party line that the Church will espouse, that of tradition and dogma over new fangled transportation solution, it is their wants and desires that need to be served. Everyone wants to get off from work when all his/her friends and relatives are also able to play hooky. With whom will they drink that case of Pale Pilsen with, when the clock strikes three in the afternoon on a Good Friday, if they're alone?

> What I am a fervent believer in is the concept of efficient transportation, something completely lost on the poor Filipino traveler

Single experience

The case I would like to make is stressed by a single experience that some may agree with. Have you tried to drive on Good Friday? Blasphemous as it may sound, especially to those over the age of 50; speeds well over a hundred can be maintained in Manila's usually congested streets. It makes one almost think that the transportation infrastructure is already adequate. You then realize you are the only car on the road, save that drunken teenager in his rice-rocket, piqued as hell that he too is not losing his religion at the Lenten meat markets that are our nation's beach getaways. The point is simple, the fewer cars on our roads the easier travel becomes.

The ball is therefore in our hands, not in the government's or the cardinal's. If we take the initiative, en masse, to reschedule our long trips then maybe the institutions can follow the example of the individual and not dictate when and how we should leave our work and responsibilities. When was the last time a vacation did not end with your tired behind finally happy to be home? Breaks from the daily grind are supposed to invigorate and energize; not drain and sap. I will not be alone in saying that probably the best thing to do during Holy Week is stay home, twiddle your thumbs and reflect on this season of sacrifice and penitence.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The signs are there

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

I RAISE A GLASS TO THE MEN and women behind the recent Manila International Auto Show. Considering the tenor of the times—unstable economy brought about by political uncertainties—I must say the event was smashingly good enough.

Some friends tell me it lacked the luster, if not a totally international flavor, of motor shows like those being held regularly in Tokyo or Bangkok, not to mention motor shows beyond Asian shores like the ones in Paris, Geneva or Detroit.

I say there's no point comparing ours to those held in Tokyo or Bangkok. N'yet.

In the first place, Tokyo is an automotive world giant and Bangkok the undisputed motoring spearhead in the Southeast Asian region. We will not be realistic, we will only be deluding ourselves, if we say the Manila event has become as magnificent like the Tokyo and Bangkok auto shows. Illusion.

In the second place, we are only into our second international auto show while Tokyo had just held its 38th biennial motor show last November, while Bangkok had its 27th straight year of showcasing its international carnival of automobiles just last month.

Trust me. I've been to the motor shows in Tokyo and Bangkok many times and, really, they now stage auto shows as effortlessly as Maria Shrapova slips into street clothes from her fashionable tennis outfit.

But worry not, fellas. We will get there soon. Political turbulence and all, we will overcome.

The signs are there. Our automotive industry is as vibrant as ever. Just look around you. New models continue to roll out of from assembly lines.

The single biggest sign was when Toyota unleashed its powerhouse IMPVs (international multipurpose vehicles) such as the Fortuner, Hi-Lux and the best-selling homegrown Innova—not to mention its new Hi-Ace. In a show of robust support to the Auto Show, Toyota even unveiled its new, state-of-the-art Previa right at the heart of the event (bravo, Sir John!).

And didn't you notice as well? The others have followed suit—Nissan unleashed its Murano, Honda its brand-new Civic, Mitsubishi the quizzical quartet of Zinger, Eclipse, Strada and Evo, and Isuzu the wondrous Alterra. I heard the Civic was unwrapped amid the congas and sambas of Latin beat at the Greenbelt Makati. Wow! I missed that one; Arnel Doria and Tin Tin Reyes could do nothing but forgive me for being absent again.

In closing, I am just wondering, though, why Volvo and BMW did not fully unravel their aces at the Auto Show that had an amazingly expanded space of nearly 10,000 square meters from its old 5,000 sq m? Maybe next year Albert, Lito?

* * *

SUREFIRE SUZUKI. The Suzuki Auto Shaw in Mandaluyong has opened, offering Suzuki's usual array of vehicles, such as the Suzuki APV, Grand Vitara, Swift, Jimny and Bravo. It also offers maintenance and repair service, and sales parts. Said Rick Panlilio: "We are giving free service estimates and 10 percent discount on parts and labor, and free comprehensive insurance or zero percent interest and low down payment on Suzuki APV GLX automatic."

* * *

QUOTE ME. To you, it maybe all right to tailgate but not your passengers.

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net.

Racing dynasties

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

POLITICAL DYNASTIES ABOUND in this politics-obsessed country, but are you aware that we have motor racing dynasties, too? The existence of motor sport-driven families is a fascinating facet of modern Philippine life that you will discover when you read "Fast Lane: A History of Motor Sports in the Philippines."

"Fast Lane" is a coffee-table book written by former Philippine Star motoring editor Junep Ocampo on commission from the Automobile Association Philippines which will launch it as part of AAP's 75th anniversary celebration next month.

AAP (formerly the Philippine Motor Association) has all the reason to publish "Fast Lane," being the country's oldest motoring club and the only Philippine affiliate of the Federation International de l' Automobile (FIA), the governing body for motor sports worldwide. As the FIA's affiliate, AAP officiates at all Philippine motor sport events and issues the Racing Driver's License to qualified drivers as well as motor sport organizing permits.

Preview

Being the editor of "Fast Lane," I got a sneak preview of the book's text and action-packed, full-page photos, in the process learning how motor sports in its various disciplines—karting, slalom, drag racing, rally, rally cross, touring car, circuit racing, Asian Formula 3 and 4x4 off-roading—came to develop in our country.

The exciting world of motor sports showcases daring young people who train and practice rigorously and take dangerous risks on the race track to satisfy their passion for speed. Racing fanaticism is so infectious that it is often passed down from one generation to the next, thereby producing motor racing dynasties. "Fast Lane" devotes entire chapters to four dynasties: those of Jose "Pocholo" Ramirez, Dante Silverio, Eddie Marcelo and Arthur Tuason.

Pocholo Ramirez, winner of the Driver of the Year title five times in the 1970s, has four sons who took up racing as soon as they could drive. The names of Jose Andre "Kookie," Georges, Louie and Miguel and Pocholo's daughter-in-law Menchie have often appeared in the winners' circle of various motor sport events. Now, Pocholo's grandsons Andre and Stefan are also into car racing. Pocholo and Georges manage the Subic International Speedway, the circuit race track that was opened in 1994. But both father and son still continue to race as do Kookie, Louie, Miguel and Menchie.

The Silverios

Dante Silverio was another dashing speedway star here and abroad in the 1970s who became the only driver to top both circuit racing and rally events in the same year when he won the Royal Rally of Champions. Soon enough, Dante's son Jojo followed in his footsteps. Dante and Jojo sometimes raced together as a team, but on occasion Jojo competed with his father, even defeating him in the 1987 Mabuhay Freedom Rally for a 1-2 Silverio father-and-son finish. Although Dante retired from racing in the 1980s, Jojo still joins events at Subic and the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Eddie Marcelo, the son of rubber and steel industrialist Jose P. Marcelo, was a champion drag racer in the 1970s who soon moved up to circuit racing and Formula cars. Eddie's eldest son Jovy, who always accompanied him to races, showed a talent for racing at an early age. Eddie knew it was time for him to retire from racing when Jovy beat him on a go-kart. Later, Eddie supported Jovy's participation in races in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, but Jovy's promising career ended in tragedy on May 17, 1992 when his Lola Cosworth hit the wall during a practice run at the Indianapolis Speedway for the Indy 500 race.

Racing school

Arthur Tuason joined drag races on Quezon Avenue in the 1960s when he was in his teens, then left for England in 1971 to study at the Jim Russel Driving School. Upon returning to Manila in 1972, Arthur resumed competing in circuit and rally events and won the Driver of the Year title. When his sons JP and Mike were old enough, Arthur exposed them to karting at Libis and Carmona and supported their participation in motor sports. Arthur won the coveted Driver of the Year title again in 1994 after he, JP and Mike finished 1-2-3 at the Subic International Speedway. Arthur's dream of establishing a racing school was fulfilled by JP three years after Arthur's untimely death in 1996. Today, the Tuason Racing School trains and produces the future champions of motor sport such as Asean Queen of Karts Michelle Bumgarner.

Aside from these motor sport dynasties, "Fast Lane" devotes five chapters to the greatest Filipino race driver of all time, father of Philippine motor sports Arsenio "Dodjie" Laurel, who set a precedent by winning the Macau Grand Prix two years in a row (1962 and 1963) aside from wining numerous local motor sport events. He planned to build a circuit racing track on Corregidor before he perished in a fiery crash at the Macau Grand Prix in 1967.

(E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.)

Vintage cars motorcade to kick off AAP auto show week

A PARADE OF SOME OF THE most impressive vintage cars will kick off on May 7 the weeklong celebration marking the 75th anniversary of the Automotive Association Philippines (formerly the Philippine Motor Association), the country's oldest car club.

Launching ceremonies for the motorcade will be held at the Manila Hotel, where the AAP had its first office. About 30 vintage cars will join the parade that will go around Manila, Pasay City and Makati before ending up in Intramuros where the best vintage cars will be awarded.

The motorcade will be participated in by the Vintage Car Club of the Philippines, Mini Car Club of the Philippines, Volkswagen Club, Karmann Registry Club of the Philippines, Mercedes-Benz Club of the Philippines and the British Roadster.

Auto show

As part of the celebrations, the AAP will also hold the first-ever AAP Auto Show at The Forum at the PICC complex from May 11 to 14. The event will showcase the latest car models from Toyota, Ford, Isuzu, Honda and Hyundai, plus a bazaar of accessories and a photo exhibition of Philippine motoring history.

Likewise, the show will spotlight the AAP Memorabilia Lane—a collection of cars, racing gears, trophies, etc. of outstanding personalities in Philippine motor sports like Dodjie Laurel, Baby Luna, Dodo Ayuyao, Robert Aventajado, Vip Isada, Mandy Eduque and Arthur Tuason.

Car clubs display

Other featured AAP Auto Show events include the Car Clubs Display, a three-day display of vintage cars at the PICC grounds by the country's top car clubs, the Toyota Road Safety Conference, the Alternative Fuels Conference, the Denso Karting Championship, plus slaloms and rally competitions.

On May 10, the AAP will hold its first invitational golf tournament at the Valley Golf and Country Club in Antipolo City.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT
263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City
Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 433-5032, 433-6802
Fax No. (48) 433-6803

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of the Project : Design, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of One Assembly Booster Pump, Electrical System and Accessories
Location Corner Manalo-Lacao St., Puerto Princesa City
Brief Description Design, supply, install and commissioning of one assembly encapsulated (pump-in-a-tube) Booster Pump multi-parallel submersible pump capable to deliver 305 cubic meter/hr at 50 meters total dynamic head (TDH) and 230 driving voltage. The control system is equipped with variable speed drive soft starter, and logic programmable controller and accessories to meet the design operating parameter, and enclosed with IP67 NEMA standard as described in Section VIII, Technical Specifications in the Bid Documents.
Approved Budget Three Million Thirty Three Thousand Five Hundred Forty Nine Pesos (P3,033,549.00) Only
Delivery Period Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	April 17, 2006 – April 28, 2006
2. Pre-Bid Conference	May 3, 2006, 1:30 P.M., PPCWD Board Room
3. Deadline for Submission of Bids	May 16, 2006, 1:30 P.M., PPCWD Board Room
4. Opening of Bids	May 16, 2006, 1:30 P.M., PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of Three Thousand Pesos (Php3,000.00) to the Puerto Princesa City Water District Cashier.

The Puerto Princesa City Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) ENGR. VICENTE D. ABREA
PPCWD BAC Chairman

(PDI–April 12 & 19, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg., P. Burgos cor. Alegre Sts., Batangas City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Contract for Security Services of PRO IV-B
ITB# PRO4B-06-006

The **PHILHEALTH REGIONAL OFFICE IV-B (PRO IV-B)** through the corporate operating budget of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation 2006 intends to apply the sum of **two million one hundred eleven thousand seven hundred and fifty pesos (P2,111,750.00)** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Security Services. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The PRO IV-B now invites Bids from eligible bidders for the Re-bid of Security Services. This contract shall take effect on June 1, 2006 until December 31, 2006. The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organization of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder of the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from April 12 to April 26, 2006 at the address written below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of *two thousand pesos* (Php 2,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PRO IV-B will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **April 26, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the 3rd floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B.

Bids and Eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **May 10, 2006, 11:00 a.m.** Late bids shall not be accepted. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount.

Bid opening shall be on **May 10, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the 3rd Floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

FORM OF SECURITY	Minimum Amount in % of ABC to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit.	One percent (1%)
2. Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1 1/2%)

The PRO IV-B reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Rhonalyn Marasigan / Johnrey Iguiron (BAC Secretariats)
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg. #89 P. Burgos corner Alegre Sts., Batangas City
Tel. No. (043)723-8822 loc. 201
Facsimile No. (043)723-8822 loc. 409
e-mail address: region4b@philhealth.gov.ph

(Sgd.) CIRILO C. BALMACEDA
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–April 12 & 19, 2006)

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J.P. Laurel Ave., Davao City
Tel. # 221-9400

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The Davao City Water District, with the Approved Budget for 2006 intends to apply the sum *(see schedule under 2)* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under contracts as listed below. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.
2. The Davao City Water District now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the following:

PACKAGE	DESCRIPTION	Approved Budget for the Contract	Bid Security (1% OF ABC)	Cost of Bid Documents
1	Various Cast Iron Fittings	P 3,802,500.00	38,025.00	2,000.00
2	Various sizes of G.I. Fittings	722,284.50	7,222.85	1,000.00
3	Various Brass Fittings	2,579,000.00	25,790.00	1,500.00
4	Various Gate Valves	805,000.00	8,050.00	1,000.00
5	Various sizes of P.E. Pipes	482,685.60	4,826.85	1,000.00
6	Various sizes of uPVC Pipes & Fittings	13,398,200.00	133,982.00	4,000.00
7	Softwares	824,650.00	8,246.50	1,000.00
8	1 set - Computer Nework Firewall Appliance	650,449.00	6,504.50	1,000.00
9	Network Attached Storage	600,000.00	6,000.00	1,000.00
10	17 units - Personal Computers w/ different specifications	983,450.00	9,834.50	1,000.00
11	2 sets - Computer Aided Design and Drafting Software w/ complete user's Manual or Guide	500,000.00	5,000.00	1,000.00
12	2 sets - Chlorine Regulator	300,000.00	3,000.00	1,000.00
13	Microbiological Laboratory Supplies	746,000.00	7,460.00	1,000.00
14	Wall Mounted Chlorine Dioxide Generator System	600,000.00	6,000.00	1,000.00
15	Liquid Chlorine	5,083,200.00	50,832.00	2,500.00
16	Supply labor & matls. for General Reconditioning & Rehabilitation of one (1) unit Ford F600 Truck including installation & Mounting of Drill Rig assembly & other conversion & Fabrication Jobs.	300,000.00	3,000.00	1,000.00

The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from *Davao City Water District* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. up to 5:00 p.m.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of non refundable fee in the amount *(stated in item no. 2)*. The method of payment will be on Cash Basis. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The *Davao City Water District* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on ***May 3, 2006 at 9:00 o'clock A.M.*** at ***DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City.***
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before the ***bidding scheduled time and date at 9:00 o' clock A.M.*** All Bids must be accompanied by a ***Bid Security*** in the form of *Cash or Manager's check* in the amount *(stated in item no. 2)*. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be at the ***DCWD BAC-A Secretariat Office, J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Dvao City on the following schedule:***

PACKAGE NO.	BIDDING SCHEDULE, TIME & DATE
1 & 2	May 15, 2006, @ 9:00 A.M.
3 & 4	May 15, 2006, @ 2:00 P.M.
5	May 16, 2006, @ 9:00 A.M.
6	May 16, 2006, @ 2:00 P.M.
7, 8 & 9	May 17, 2006, @ 9:00 A.M.
10 & 11	May 17, 2006, @ 2:00 P.M.
12 & 13	May 18, 2006, @ 9:00 A.M.
14 & 15	May 18, 2006, @ 2:00 P.M.
16	May 19, 2006, @ 9:00 A.M.

Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

9. The *Davao City Water District* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Davao City Water District
BAC-A
J.P. Laurel Ave., Bajada, Davao City
Tel. No. 221 9400 (8000)
E-mail add dcwd@davao-water.gov.ph
Fax No. 224-5382
Website www.davao-water.gov.ph

(Sgd.) VIRGINIA S. MARIMON
BAC-A Chairperson

(PDI – April 12 & 19, 2006)

BIR wants to keep power to cut deals

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE wants to keep its power to strike compromise agreements with tax delinquents.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said forging compromise deals was sometimes necessary to avoid lengthy court debates and hasten the collection of taxes.

Buñag said he saw no need to alter the National Internal Revenue Code, which some members of Congress want amended to curtail the BIR's authority to strike compromise deals.

The move was prompted by the plan of the BIR to enter into a deal with the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC) regarding the insurer's P7.6-billion tax case.

Buñag said the BIR has in fact not yet entered into a "compromise settlement" with PDIC.

Nelson Aspe, director for the BIR's Makati revenue region, said compromise settlement technically means that the BIR would only collect 40 percent or 10 percent of the total tax liability of an individual or entity depending on the capacity to pay.

In the case involving PDIC, Aspe said, the agreement was that the BIR would only waive penalties but still collect the principal amount of back taxes in the event that the Department of Justice rules that PDIC is liable to pay taxes.

On the other hand, if the DOJ agrees with PDIC's position that the insurer is not liable to pay taxes, then the BIR would no longer run after the insurer but would be allowed to keep the P1.5-billion payment made by the PDIC.

The PDIC earlier paid the BIR P1.5 billion as advanced payment for its alleged back taxes.

The PDIC said it should not be liable to pay the taxes because its functions were merely spun-off from those of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which enjoys tax perks.

More flights from China to Subic eyed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

AT LEAST THREE MORE LOCAL GOVERNments in China are interested in opening direct chartered flights between the mainland and the Subic freeport, according to the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

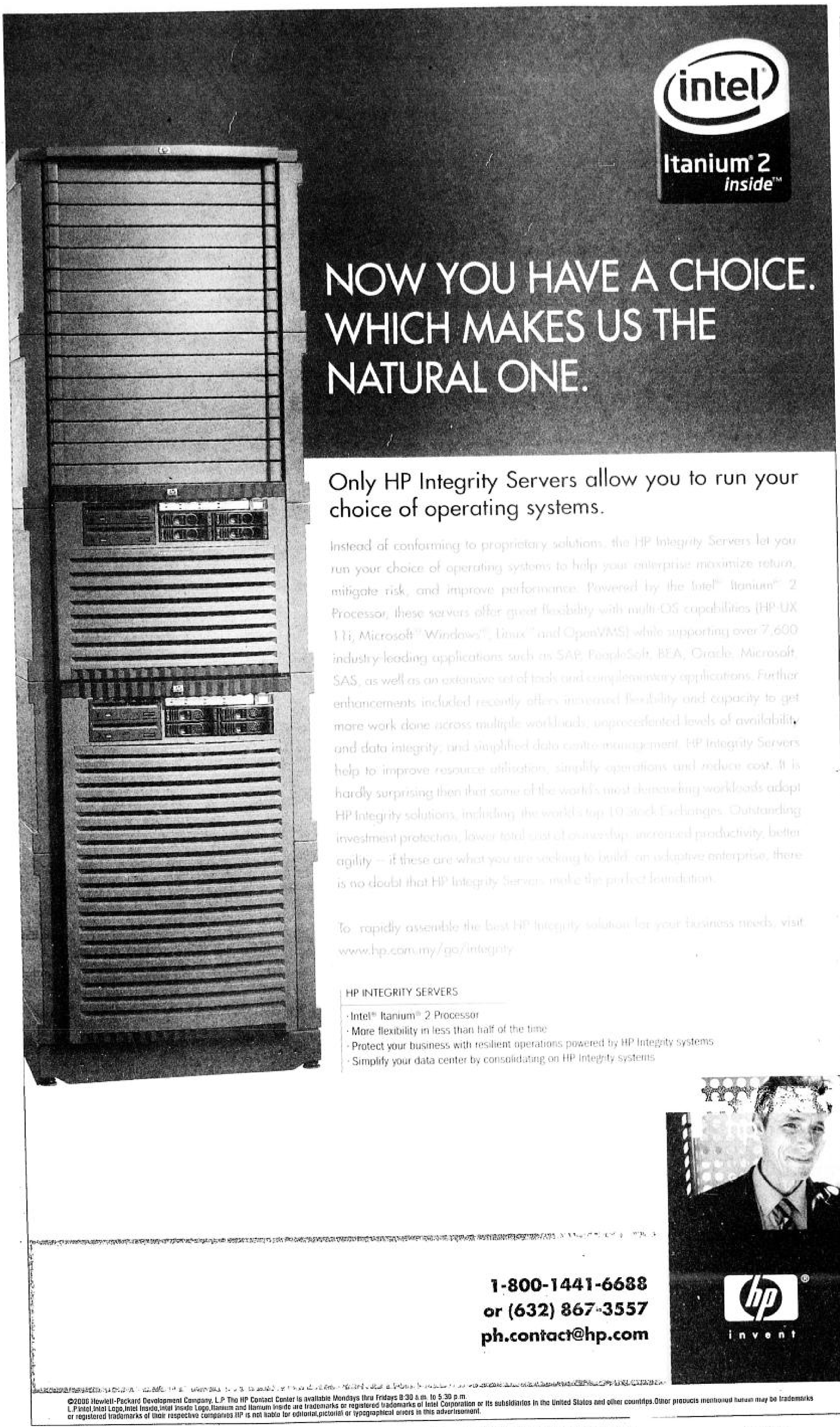
SBMA Administrator Armand C. Arreza said in a statement that officials of Shijiazhuang and Taizhou cities, as well as one municipality in Southern China expressed support for direct flights to Subic.

"We want to explore these with priorities," Arreza said, adding that more Asian cities would want to establish direct flights to Subic in light of several improvements being implemented in the freeport.

These include upgrades to the Subic Bay International Airport and the ongoing Subic Bay Port Development project.

The SBMA official explained that Shijiazhuang City is the capital of Hebei province, which has a population of 68 million and is considered the sixth richest province of China.

The proposed flights would add to the current domestic and international direct flights such as Mandarin Air's Subic-Taiwan route, Cebu Pacific's Subic-Incheon (South Korea), and Air Philippines Subic-Guangzhou flights.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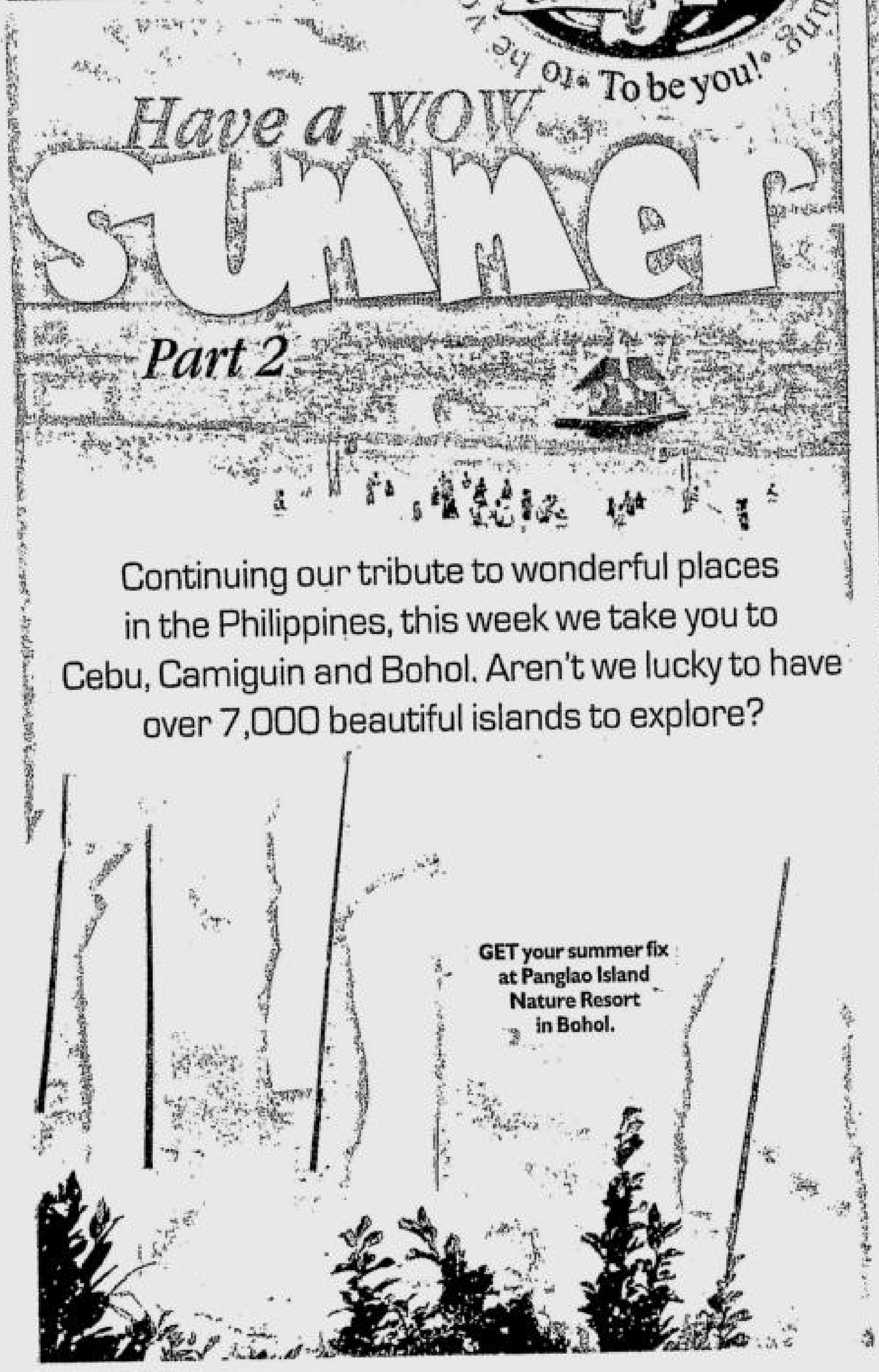

Continuing our tribute to wonderful places in the Philippines, this week we take you to Cebu, Camiguin and Bohol. Aren't we lucky to have over 7,000 beautiful islands to explore?

GET your summer fix at Panglao Island Nature Resort in Bohol.

Precious Panglao

This Bohol resort is the ultimate summer fantasy with all the works

By Irene C. Perez

PICTURE THE TALCUM-SOFT WHITE sands of Bohol, breezy cabanas, the cool sea breeze on your skin and the whiff of sea mist. Throw in gorgeous hotties and chocolates on your bed every night.

Panglao is the ultimate summer fantasy with all the works. Your postcard-perfect paradise.

And then it rains.

Bummer? Not really. Even if there were occasional drizzles every now and then, Panglao Island Nature Resort in Bohol was a superb hideaway to celebrities, models and media people who were recently invited to. the three-day Nivea White Summer event.

Bohol virgins

Okay, so most of us were Bohol virgins. As a first timer, I expected the mandatory tarsier- and dolphin-watching bit. The weather didn't quite go well with that. We had the famous Loboc River Cruise, instead.

We got into a banca-mounted restaurant where native Boholano dishes were served. A guy in local costume serenaded us as we cruised while having lunch. He sang a series of Beatles classics; I heard the guy in the other boat do a Cueshe.

Boracay has been, to a point, overrated, not to mention crowded. A lifestyle fixture even said it looks like

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DIET BE DAMNED. Feast on fresh seafood and Boholano dishes on the beach.

NIVEA transformed the manmade islet from a picnic grove during lunch to a party nook at night.

IRENE PEREZ

BUFF up through water sports in Panglao.

MODEL Bubbles Paraiso and actor Luis Alandy chill out after a game.

Precious Panglao

From page C1

"Greenbelt 3 transported into an island."

Bohol allows for a more tranquil experience, but it doesn't mean less of a party. It means cleaner beaches, pristine sands and having your piña colada without someone smashing into you while catching his frisbee.

Beach bomb

When in Panglao Nature Island Resort with friends, ask for a cabana overlooking the sea. Ah, the sea. Get a spotless mind off school or office work while baking under the sun. The beach is a cove-like short stretch. You can leisurely walk its entire length in minutes.

If you had had enough of saltwater, there's the sparkling infinity pool (great for photo-ops for your Friendster account!) that melts into the sea. It has a Seahorse Pool Bar—shaped like but not inhabited by one—so that you can have your next piña colada without leaving the water.

Some meters from the shore is a charming manmade islet. You can reach it by foot during low tide. If it's high tide, you can either swim or get a ferry ride.

Nivea transformed the islet into a picnic grove during lunch and a chill-out nook during dinner.

Games and cheers

And what's the beach without summer games? Press peeps, models and actors battled it out in fun games like water polo, beach volleyball, bench sorters and kayak tug-of-war.

The brawny ones like Paolo Paraiso, Antonio Aquitania and Wendell Ramos played tough. Alessandra de Rossi and Bubbles Paraiso remained cuties even at play.

For eternal non-athletes like me, well, I was a one-woman cheering squad for my team.

Think UAAP—pure screams, no drums. Good thing Nivea's marketing madame Rica King joined in the rally.

For some "dry sport," there's a game room where you can shoot some pool, play table tennis and darts. If you have more time and moolah, ask about scuba diving, cave diving, island-hopping tours and kayaking activities. Snorkeling and windsurfing are available for beach bums, too.

If those activities are not enough, there's a well-equipped gym, a winding jogging path and sauna for fitness junkies.

BIANCA King fears no sun with Nivea Whitening Sunblock.

KAYAK with Andrew Wolff.

OCEAN KAYAK

Charming cabanas

My cabana was far from the beach front, but you can always ask someone to drive you in a cart to your room if you get too tired from sports.

The spacious high-ceiling, thatched-roof hut makes for a refreshing snooze. It has satellite TV so "American Idol" addicts won't miss an episode.

I loved the rocking chair to pieces, and the Jacuzzi at the balcony was perfect for a private dip.

If it gets too cold outside, run a bubble bath with aromatic foaming oil, light up some candles and soak in the bath tub instead.

Being a "nature resort" preserved in its natural glory, Panglao warns guests of fireflies, bugs, bees, house lizards, frogs and pythons, though.

So don't be a brat if you happen to see bugs outside your room.

As a treat, Cadbury chocolates were delivered in our room—a different kind every night. Tired from pseudo cheerleading, I capped up the games with a calming massage using Nivea oil at the makeshift spa.

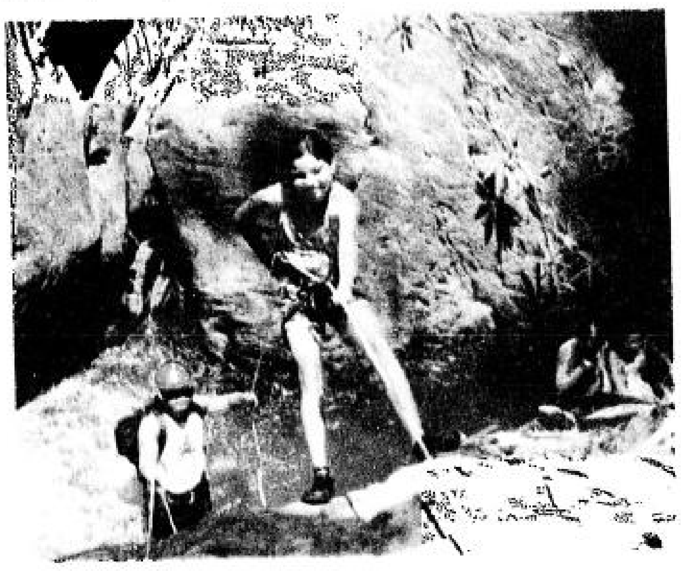
Nivea wrapped up the Bohol experience with the fun games awards night. The Loboc Children's Choir performed during the farewell dinner, and now I know why these angels often make it to print and TV.

The kids did three sets of songs and they left us dreamy with dropped jaws. I guess everyone was so awed that almost all teams donated their prize money to the choir.

Again, it rained during our last night, but it didn't stop us from partying. Bubblies from Premier Wines and Spirits were served and everyone was tanned, tipsy and dancing—basically hanging on to our last night at the precious island.

Rain and all, we loved Bohol.

E-mail the author at iperez@inquirer.com.ph
Visit www.nivea.com and www.panglaoisland.com



EXTREME experience

CLOSE encounters of the *pawikan* kind

Island of fire and beauty

The other side of Camiguin is as compelling as its famous lanzones

By Christian B. Bautista
2bUI Correspondent

CAMIGUIN, WITH ITS extravagant agricultural festivals and its unique ancestral homes, exudes an air of serenity that seems to turn back the hands of time.

Retaining its old-world charms despite scattered tinges of progress, Camiguin is a manifestation of the quintessential Filipino small town. In all respects, the island is a picturesque connection to the past.

However, beneath its calm exterior and attractive beaches lies an opportunity for adventure that would prove formidable to even the most experienced thrill-seeker. With its treacherous hiking trails and beautiful dive sites, Camiguin offers more than an opportunity to sunbathe.

Indeed, Camiguin did not get its moniker of "island born of fire" for nothing. From a bird's-eye view (which is probably the first perspective most travelers would see of the place), it is obvious there is more to Camiguin than sandy beaches.

Its most noticeable quality is the abundance of volcanoes (seven), the most famous of which is Mt. Hibok-Hibok. This characteristic has been the town's primary source of lore, with the fame of the Sunken Cemetery and the haunting memorial for the town then known as Cotta Bato, both of which relate to Mt. Vulcan Daan's explosion in 1871.

Beautiful spots

A journey to Camiguin would not be complete without getting your feet wet. The island, with its proliferation of soft corals and solidified underwater lava formations, has some of the country's most beautiful diving spots. Most notable of these is White Island, a white sandbar that changes its shape according to tide.

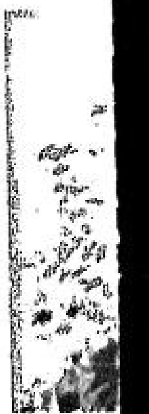
Adventure-seeking landlubbers, however, would not be left out with the arduous canyoning trail to Kitabawasan Falls. The path, which culminates at the brink of the falls' 160-meter drop, is highlighted by a thrilling "natural water slide."

Less daring travelers would also find numerous places to visit. On top of the list would be Agohay, the island's most prominent sandy beach. The location is also known for its soda, cold and hot springs, some of which are told to have the ability to cure internal ailments.

In addition, several historic churches can be found in different parts of the island. The most popular is Sto. Rosario in Sagay, which was built in 1882.

Camiguin is a pear-shaped volcanic island just north of Misamis Oriental

How to get there: Three flights a week from Cebu via Seair
What to bring: Sunblock and footwear you wouldn't mind getting wet
What to do: Canyoning, rapelling, diving, snorkeling and surveying old ruins
What to eat: *Kilawing tanigue, piniato,* pastel and lanzones
What to buy: Local delicacies
Other tips: If you plan on doing more than hitting the beach, be sure to look for Johnny's Dive n' Fun.



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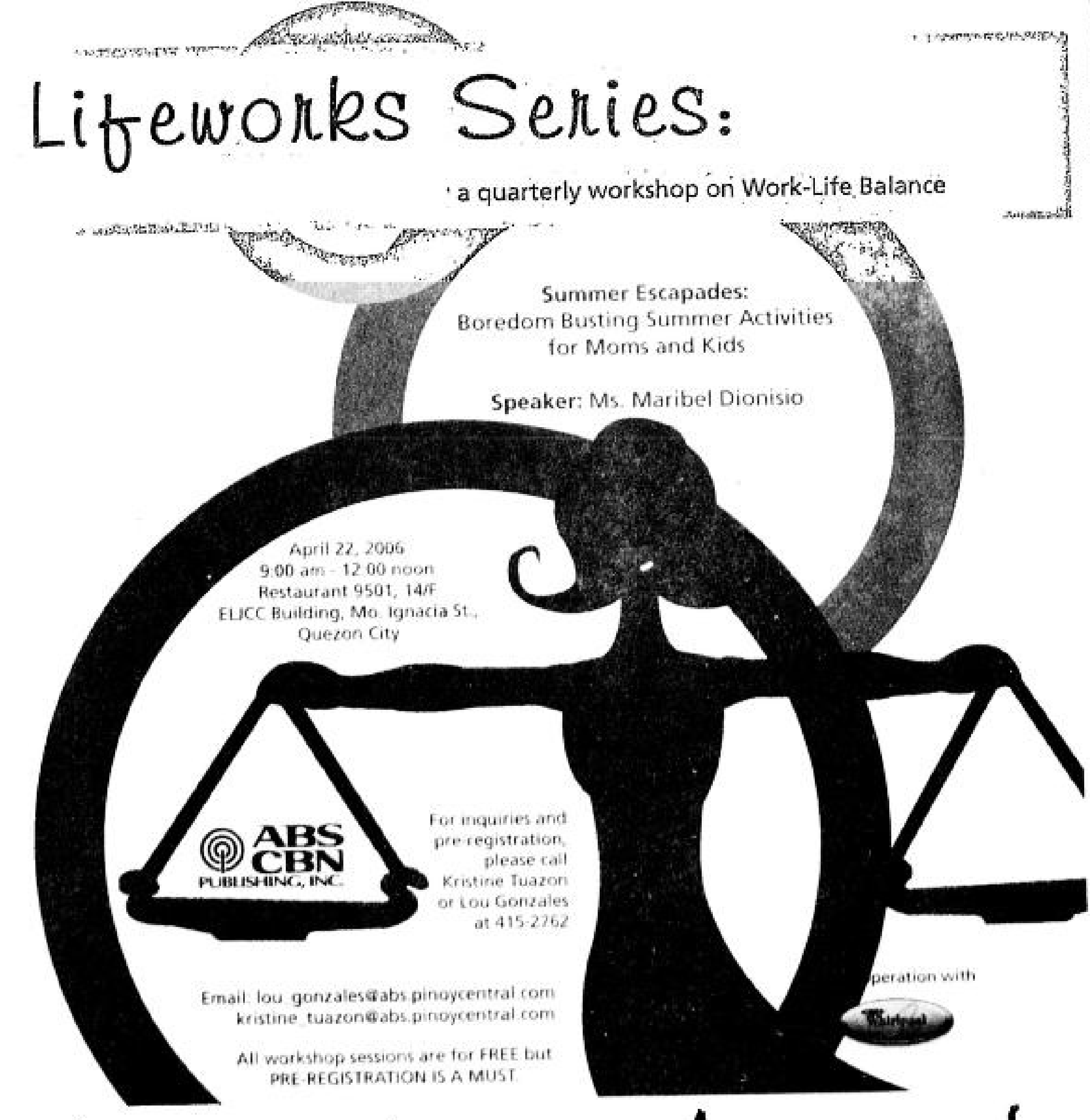

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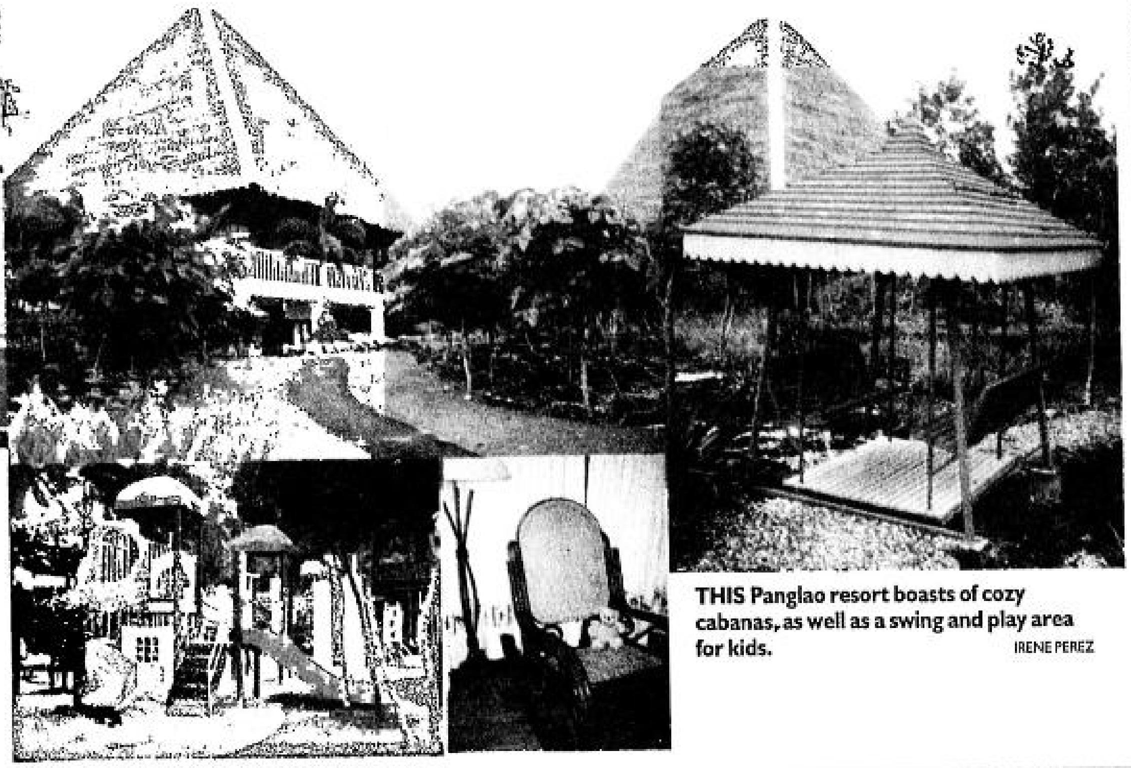
THE ENTICING infinity pools IRENE PEREZ



THIS Panglao resort boasts of cozy cabanas, as well as a swing and play area for kids. IRENE PEREZ

Panglao Island Nature Resort

How to get there: Get a plane to Tagbilaran. Panglao Island lies just opposite Tagbilaran City, and is connected to Bohol via two bridges. It is a 15-minute trip by land from downtown Tagbilaran, and an hour-and-a-half ferry ride from Cebu City.

What to bring: All your basic beach stuff. Stock up on sunblock! If you want to bask in the sun but have the *"ayokong umitim"* syndrome, bring along Nivea Sun's line of whitening sunblocks for face and body with SPF 30 and 50.

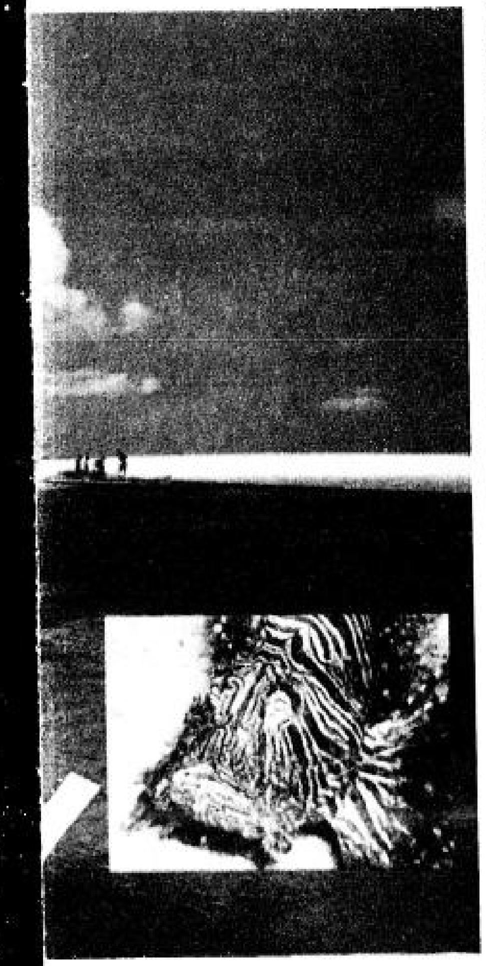
Nivea's Rica King promises you won't turn into toast even if you bake for long periods. Nivea Sun Face Sunblock Whitening Cream and Nivea Sun Whitening Sunblock Lotion protect your skin, so you don't have to worry even if it's your debut next week.

If you prefer a golden tan, spritz on Nivea Sun Oil Spray. It has jojoba oil that moisturizes skin for an even, rich color.

What to do: All sorts of water sports, so don't forget your aqua shoes and beach gear.

What to eat: Filipino, Continental and Oriental dishes are served in the restaurant. You can have your meals in the gazebo with full view of the sea.

What to buy: The Bohol classic Peanut Kisses now has spin-offs—peanut cookies, choco-peanut cookies, peanut *pastillas*, *turones de mani*, peanut bars—practically everything peanut-laced. It's cheaper to buy 'em at the grocery of Bohol Quality, the nearest local mall.



TER heaven

lemo

Win American Idol goodies!

SIT UP, SING ALONG AND ROOT FOR your idols, but make sure you pay attention when you watch "American Idol" on Star World tonight, because 2bU! is giving away exclusive, limited-edition "American Idol" goodies to three fans who can answer the following questions correctly about tonight's show:

1. What will Elliot Yamin sing?
2. Who will be the first singer to perform tonight?
3. What will Katherine McPhee wear during her performance?

Three "American Idol" fans who e-mail their answers first to starworldamericanidol_on_2bu@yahoo.com will win a limited-edition "American Idol" shower radio pack and a CD holder each! The winners' names will be revealed in next Wednesday's issue of 2bU, along with a fresh batch of questions you should watch out for!

"American Idol" airs live on Star World at 5 p.m. today, with primetime telecasts at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

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- ***1 (202.5g) pack of M&M's®***
- ***1 (240g) pack of M&M's®***

* Valid on "yellow-swiper" games only, "Yellow-swiper" games are normally priced at P10-P20. Your powercard allows you 3 swipes on "yellow-swiper" arcade games.

Your promo powercard will not be honored when swiped in "red-swiper" and "blue-swiper" games.

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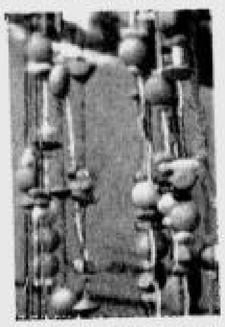
Cebu buys and bites

The premiere city of the South has lots to offer in charm, chow and crafts


WOODEN necklaces sold on the streets—only P20!

ACCESSORIES heaven

HATS galore

Text and photos by Katrina Yap
2bU! Correspondent

THE LAST TIME I WAS IN CEBU WAS FOR the Sinulog Festival. The place was bursting with activities: The major malls were on sale, there were concerts and parties every single day. Sinulog dancing was everywhere—the streets, inside the malls, even restaurants.

Thousands joined the procession of the Miraculous Image of Santo Niño, and the grand parade the following day was attended by swarms of people traveling by foot, braving the unforgiving sun.

Traffic was terrible. According to the locals, that wasn't typical, and was only due to the volume of tourists from in and out of the country taking part in the festivities.

The best hotels within the city were fully booked. My companions and I ended up staying in a hotel in Guadalupe. I had not been to Guadalupe before, so it helped that we had hired a vehicle and a driver to take us around.

Given the timing of our visit, our trip centered on Sinulog-related activities. But since I was traveling with a group of girls, it was understood we had to make time for shopping. I was also blessed because they didn't have any qualms about pigging out, and we ate to our hearts' content (perhaps the highlight of the trip).

Jewelry designer Happy David happened to be in Cebu then for business. She showed us around for a day, and gave us a list of places to visit as she couldn't accompany us all throughout our stay. Well, we didn't even get to see a quarter of the restos, cafés and stores she recommended.

Here are some of them, plus a few good ones we came across on our own.

SOMETHING smells fishy. Mountains of dried fish line the Tabo-an public market.

MUST-TRY *suman* and *latik*

Abaseria Deli and Resto Café

39-B Cong. Noel St., Villa Aurora, Cebu City

Abaseria is a homey deli and resto café that serves mostly Filipino food. The servings are quite small, but the food's really good. Try the *adobo*-style *bangus* belly (P175), Filipino-style *humba* (P125), baked ribs with ginger (P110), and tofu with organic mushroom (P175). The *suman* and *latik* with coco jam are superb.

Abaseria also sells accessories and home accents, among them beaded necklaces (P80) and bangles (P30-P100).

CnT Lechon

J. Luna St., Mabolo (across SM Cebu)

You can't go to Cebu without tasting CnT Lechon, which is just across SM Cebu. For less than P600, there was more than enough *lechon*, *chicharon bulaklak*, rice and drinks to feed five girls.

Goodah Gud

935-B Salinas Drive, Lahug, Cebu City

The food took forever to arrive at Goodah Gud, but all was forgiven with its tasty dishes: fresh and baked oysters (P120/kilo) and calamari (P55/100g). The prawns and *baticolon* weren't bad either.

Kaona Grill

Ayala, Cebu City

An al fresco resto, Kaona is a very relaxing place to enjoy a meal. Food is cheap, too: Spareribs and rice cost P75, while *dalandan* juice is only P20.

Tabo-an Public Market

Searching for *pasalubong*? Head to the Tabo-an Public Market. Here's where one of the girls' desperate search for *danggit* ended (I, on the other hand, was on the hunt for Carcar *chicharon*. I also got my *chicharon*, plus dried mangoes and *otap*, from the market).

Pan Arts

P. Remedio St. Banilad, Mandaue City

Pan Arts is another accessories haven. Don't let the exterior fool you. It may be a factory, but inside are fashion accessories being sold at 50-percent off. Necklaces went for P20, and a pair of earrings for P10 (you read that right). Timing is important when shopping here. When you see something you like, grab it, as there are only limited stocks.

Avatar, Bellavista Hotel

M.L. Quezon Highway, Lapu-Lapu City
Mactan, Cebu

If you like quirky, *kikay* bags and accessories, don't leave for Manila without dropping by The Bellavista Hotel along the M.L. Quezon Highway (it's on the way to the airport). Inside is Avatar, a showroom of accessories for export. Bags are priced at P300 and up. The other stuff, however, are quite pricey. No haggling here, but I gave in and shelled out P490 for a bracelet reminiscent of Candy Land.

E-mail the author at tri@i-manila.com.ph

KAONA Grill's busy kitchen

THE PLACE: THE QUEEN CITY OF THE SOUTH—CEBU

How to get there: By air or sea. A sea trip from Manila to Cebu takes 18-22 hours. But that allows you to spend quality time with your companions, and could prove to be another adventure altogether.

What to bring: Cash. There are may be a lot of ATMs and most establishments do accept credit cards, but it's still best to transact in cash when in Cebu. Imagine the hassle should your card get captured by an ATM machine. You'll also need cash when buying from *tiangges* and markets.

Camera. It's a travel essential.

Map. A must-bring if you don't have friends from Cebu who can show you around.

Watch. You'll lose track of time when you're having fun!

Your cell phone, charger, extra battery. Whether you're traveling with a big or small group, you and your buddies might decide on splitting up and just meeting up again, especially if you have different "goals" (i.e., shopping, food-tripping, exploring, etc). You'll need a cell phone so you can keep in touch while exploring by yourself.

Comfortable shoes. There's a lot of walking around during shoppin or tours.

Flip flops. Not all hotels provide slippers for their guests.

Swimsuits. Cebu has clean and beautiful beaches, especially in Ma tan.

What to do: Revisit history by checking out Magellan's Cross, the Taoist Temple, Fort San Pedro, the Chapel of the Last Supper, Magellan's Monument, the Lapu-lapu Shrine... the list goes on.

Go to the beach. Engage in various water sports and activities, or just chill.

Go shopping. Be on the lookout for sale events.

What to eat: Seafood, *inihaw*, *lechon*, *chicharon*, dried mangoes fresh and dried fruits.

What to buy: Check out hand-crafted souvenirs and accessories. If you're into music, look for a good guitar in Lapu-lapu. Don't forget th *pasalubong*!

Other tips: Pack light. Should you forget something, the mall is jus around the corner.

Pig out! But don't forget to brush your teeth! During the last Sinulog Oral-B had doctors from the UP College Dentistry conducting free check-ups through a roving coaster and a booth within Metro Ayala. People were eating huge amounts of food with the fiesta as an excuse What better opportunity to reinforce oral health care?

Rent a vehicle/driver if you don't have somebody to show you around. This way, you don't lose time when moving from one place to another. This also decreases chances of you getting lost. Request for a driver who can converse in English or Tagalog if you don't speak Cebuano.

Bring a friend. An adventure is much more enjoyable when with company (it also helps if your companion speaks Cebuano because he/she will be able to haggle when you're shopping!).

Keep yourself hydrated. Always bring a bottle (or two) of water with you.

Enjoy the trip! Try not to see your itinerary as a to-do checklist. Don t rush activities just for the purpose of accomplishing them. Use your itinerary as a mere guide.

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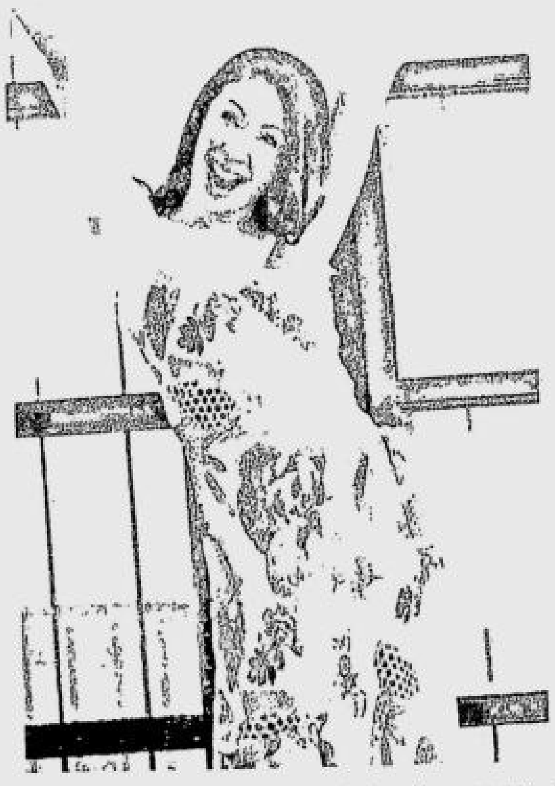
AHHCHOO!-free

Suffering from allergic rhinitis? Giselle Sanchez shares tips on how to stay AHHCHOO-free.

AHHCHOO! Comedienne Giselle Sanchez awakes to endless and bothersome sneezing due to allergic rhinitis. With Benadryl AH, she breezes through the day without nagging sneezes.



Comedienne Giselle Sanchez can't afford to be bothered by allergic rhinitis. As a sought-after corporate show host, singer, actress, wife, and mother, her schedule is packed—and dealing with the bothersome symptoms of allergic rhinitis is no laughing matter.

A Closer Look at Allergic Rhinitis

Allergic rhinitis happens when there is swelling in the nose lining or nasal membrane caused by exposure to allergens such as house dust mites, pollen, animal dander, or pollution. When inhaled by allergic persons, allergens are substances that trigger the symptoms of allergic rhinitis such as sneezing, runny nose and itchy, watery eyes.

A person who suffers from allergic rhinitis may sneeze repeatedly. The sneezing usually follows a pattern and may occur almost daily, especially upon waking up in the morning.

Airborne elements such as cigarette smoke and strong perfume scents can aggravate symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

Research shows that a number of allergic rhinitis sufferers confuse their condition with the common colds and as such, self medicate with common colds remedies.

Helpful Tips

Help control the effects of allergic rhinitis and its bothersome symptoms by cleaning your homes regularly, especially your beddings. This helps minimize the amount of house dust mite droppings in your home environment which is a major trigger of allergic reactions.

Pets must be kept well-groomed. "I have a rottweiler named Frodo. Since I discovered I have allergic rhinitis, I have made a more conscious effort to keep him neat and clean by giving him regular baths," shares Giselle.

Remember that allergic rhinitis is different from the common colds. Giselle narrates: "I didn't know the term allergic rhinitis until I had myself examined by a doctor. All this time I thought I just had colds." As a result, Giselle took medication for colds, which expectedly did not relieve her allergic rhinitis symptoms.

Get instant relief from the bothersome symptoms of allergic rhinitis with a medication specifically formulated for allergic rhinitis, like Benadryl AH (Diphenhydramine Hcl) capsule. With Benadryl AH (Diphenhydramine Hcl) capsule, Giselle is able to breeze through her many roles without the bothersome symptoms of allergic rhinitis such as sneezing, runny nose and itchy watery eyes.

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